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ABSTRACT

This book contains a collection of 76 original essays produced by students at a model adult literacy program run by Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa Valley (Wisconsin). The essays were produced by the students with the encouragement of their tutors. The essays are grouped into the following topic categories: life's lessons, citizenship, work and recreation, memories of family life, joys and trials of parenthood, goals and challenges, legends and customs from faraway lands, the ravages of war, and finding a new homeland. The writers and their tutors are profiled at the end of the book. (KC)

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ED 374 234

Celebrate Writing

A collection of narratives, poems, and essays

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Celebrate Writing 1994

A collection of narratives, poems, and essays

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Literacy Volunteers of America–
Chippewa Valley

ISBN: 1-885474-18-0

This book is dedicated to all the tutors of Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa Valley who have helped our students learn to express their thoughts and feelings in writing and to the volunteers who contributed to the publication of this book.

Special Thanks to:

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and

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Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa Valley (LVA-CV) is an organization of trained volunteers with a three-fold mission:

- To help adults improve their basic literacy skills;
- To provide education about literacy to the public;
- To act as a referral agent for those seeking help.

The organization is supported by a professional staff and serves students and tutors in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties, Wisconsin.

Preface

Celebrate Writing 1994 was designed to help adult literacy students improve their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Its immediate result is this collection of original essays produced by LVA–CV students with the encouragement of their tutors. In order to publish as many pieces as possible, the editorial committee made a few minor cuts that they felt were necessary. They also normalized basic punctuation and supplied titles where the authors had not done so. The ultimate goal of this and all other LVA–CV projects is to help adults become self-sufficient in their daily lives.

This project is made possible by a grant provided by Dayton's, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The Dayton Hudson Corporation is a Minneaplis-based growth company focusing exclusively on general merchandise retailing. It annually budgets an amount equal to five percent of its federally taxable income for community giving. Through its "Community Giving Program," the Dayton's store in Eau Claire, working with its community giving committee employees, contributed funds to implement a writing project for LVA–CV students and tutors. This is the third consecutive year for Dayton's support and without it this project could not have been implemented. Financial suppport

was also received from the United Way of Greater Eau Claire.

Additional funding for this project was provided by a grant entitled "Writing Ourselves: Writers Live at the Library." L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, in cooperation with the Eau Claire Regional Arts Council and LVA–CV, sponsored this year-long series of programs in 1993. The series included programs, workshops, and author visits emphasizing autobiography and local and regional authors. Under the auspices of this program, David Dial, LVA volunteer, worked with several Hmong students. These writers' works are included in this anthology and are identified by the "Writers Live at the Library" logo.

"Writing Ourselves: Writers Live at the Library" was funded by a grant to the American Library Association from the Lila Wallace Readers Digest Fund. Local funding was also provided by the Friends of the L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library.

In addition to this collection, *Bear Tales 1994*, a book written by parents and children enrolled in the LVA Family Literacy Progam, has been published.

Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa Valley is deeply grateful to Dayton's, L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, and United Way for their generous sponsorship.

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Blinded

By Donna Atchison

Blinded by love,
Blinded by faith,
Blinded by life's many colors.

Love leaves you blinded.
You can make good, you can make bad decisions.
It can leave you happy,
It can shatter your world.

Faith can leave you blinded.
It can strengthen or divert your faith, your God.
If you rely too much on something or someone,
It can eventually disappear.
Or it can make a common barrier for your safe haven.

Life can leave you blinded.
You can get so used to living a certain way,
That if it disappears, you're left feeling as if you have no
Where to turn, no where to go, no where to run.

Tree

By Won Kim

I can see an old pine tree from my kitchen window.

She watches over my house making me feel safe inside. She is bigger and taller than the house. Her branches are like a mother's open arms.

The beautiful pine tree is dark green. Everything else changes around her. The seasons change. Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter always come and go. The temperature goes up and down. But my tree stays the same beautiful dark green.

I want to be like the old pine tree: strong and with no fear, always there for my children; comforting, loving and keeping them safe.

"Writers Live at the Library"

School in Laos

By Lue Yang

To all children that I love, this story is special for you. I want to tell you all about how the children in Laos go to school. It is not easy like this country (U.S.A.). It is more difficult for all children. They do not have good schools. The barns in this country are much better.

They don't have school lunches provided, no good library, no school bus because there are no roads. Everyone just walks to school every day, every week, and year after year. You have to bring your own lunch, your own books, and your own supplies. Everyday , you have to wake up early, about 5:30 or 6:00 a.m., and walk to school. It takes you about 30 minutes to one hour to walk to school.

Some valleys don't have school at all, so you have to go to another valley. That's the way it was for me. You need to take one or two days to get to the valley where the school is; then you have to stay there many months before you come back to visit home.

When I was a student, they didn't have dormitories at school for those from other villages. I had to help build a small house, made of bamboo, and my own bed. Mostly, we had four or five

people living together. We had to take turns to cook, but I was too little to know how to cook. I had to go get water and firewood. When it got dark, everybody studied by lamplight for three or four hours before we went to bed.

We were lonely; we looked forward to the end of the semester. When we came to visit home, we needed to prepare and bring back to school enough of our own rice, meat, and vegetables to get through the school semester. But everyone who has a chance to go to school—they study hard. No one drops out of school like in this country.

They didn't have dormitories at school for those from other villages. I had to help build a small house, made of bamboo, and my own bed.

Why don't children in the U.S.A. want to study hard? So many drop out of school when they are just in junior or high school. I think the problem is, it is too easy for you here. You have everything—freedom—then you forget to think about the future.

The father in an article said to his children, "They can take everything you have from you, but no one can take your education from you."

I say, please stay in school and finish your goal. The more you know, the better you can be. Education is the key for you to open your future.

"Writers Live at the Library"

Fishing

By Kou Her

When I was in Laos I was a young boy. Once my father and his friend Vang took me to fish with them. I was very excited because it was my first time to go fishing at Muang Cha River. It was two miles from my house to the Muang Cha River. It took two hours to walk there.

We maybe walked one hour. I started to get tired and cried like a pup without his mother. Vang saw me and he asked my father, "How's Kou doing?" He turned back to look at me and said, "What are you afraid for? Is it a tiger?"

"Not a tiger, but I am so tired and I almost can't walk," I said.

"Quick, mop your tears," Vang said.

My father went up the path and cut three leaves of the banana tree to cover us from getting wet.

I immediately mopped my tears, and he carried me on his back. Unfortunately, on the way it was raining cats and dogs. My father went up the path and cut three leaves of the banana tree to cover us from getting wet, but it did really not work well. All of us got wet and shivered from cold.

When we got to the Muang Cha River, the water got deeper than usual. We didn't have the fish pole, but my father carried a knife. My father gave his knife to Vang, and said, "Would you please cut two fishing poles for us?"

If you approach danger, and someone would like to save your life, don't get angry.

Vang quickly cut two small bamboos, one for him and one for my father. The bamboos were about doublearms in length. They used the bamboos as fishing poles. We started to fish at 10:00 a.m.. Until 2:00 p.m., we got nothing.

By that time, I was so hungry, and I really wanted to eat fish. I cried again, and I went down into the water. While I was going into the water I heard a sound, "Stop, stop!"

I stopped and I turned my face to Vang, but I still pointed my finger down to the river and said, "I want to eat fish!"

Vang smiled and said, "How can you get fish, boy?" Then I marched back up the bank like a soldier.

After a while, Vang got a fish as big as my arm. He gave the fish to me and he continued to fish. I almost ate a live fish because I didn't know. My father saw me and he said, "Do not eat the fish." He took the fish away and cooked it for lunch. After we had lunch, I was full, but not my father and Vang. Both of them kept fishing until 5:00 p.m. They didn't get a lot of fish. It began to get dark, and I was anxious to come back home.

On the way back home, it was too slippery. I couldn't walk without my father holding my hand. When we got home, I told what had happened to my mother, and I said, "Vang isn't kind to me."

She answered, "That's poor thinking. If you go down into the river, probably the fish will catch you—not you catch the fish."

I said, "I won't go fishing with them anymore. I won't eat these fishes!" I put my hands on my hips and I looked down at the floor.

Then my mother prepared the fish and cooked them for dinner. I was the one who first ate the fish, but I just ate quietly in the kitchen. I didn't want anybody to see me. I put the fish bones in my pocket.

After I finished eating the fish, I went out and took the bones from my pocket to throw away in the garbage. When everyone joined the dinner I pretended that I didn't want to eat the fish, but obviously they knew that I really wanted to eat it. So my father gave me some fish, and I ate the fish happily.

If you approach danger, and someone would like to save your life, don't get angry. When you feel better later, you will be embarrassed by how you acted.

Unexpected News

By Randy Steinmetz

On New Year's Day I ushered at St. Olaf's Church, and after Mass I went home to be with my wife, Cindy, and my son, Christopher. Clara, Cindy's mom, was there too. She played with Christopher and also made soup which we had for dinner. It was a quiet afternoon spent watching the video "Dances With Wolves." Around six o'clock

my brother's wife called to say that my brother Tim was in a serious automobile accident. She suggested that if I was upset I'd better not drive, so I called my other brother, David, to take me to the hospital. My brother Robin met us there.. When I asked him how Tim was he sadly replied, "He is dead."

My first reaction caused me to go into shock. I was numb all over. Before I went over to see Tim's body I asked Cindy to go with me for support. It was hard to accept what I saw. I didn't want to feel pity only for myself, so I went over to offer my condolences to each member of the family. I gave a hug to each one, and some cried on my shoulder.

At first I wanted to blame someone, but as time went on I learned to accept his death.

Afterward all of us met at my parents' place even though they were not home. It was good for us to get together and talk over the happy times we had with Tim. We remembered how good he was with the elderly. He was very kind to Grandma and took her many places. At times Grandma could be a little difficult, but Tim let it go in one ear and out the other.

When Cindy and I went home we were both upset and could not sleep. I kept tossing and turning trying to put the puzzle together.

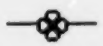
At first I wanted to blame someone, but as time went on I learned to accept his death because I believe all the wonderful works he did are being rewarded.

One of the difficult tasks we had was to call my mom and dad who were visiting in Texas (they had

only been there for 24 hours) to tell them that Tim was in a serious accident. Another call later informed them that Tim had died. Mom took it very hard and Dad tried to comfort her the best way he knew how. What was really great about our family is how we went ahead and started plans for the wake and funeral. These plans met with the approval of my parents.

Because Tim was so well known and liked, many friends and neighbors turned out for both the wake and funeral. Tim's wife, Linda was strong. She was able to console all of us and expressed her gratitude to all who came.

All of us learned a great deal from Tim's death. From now on we hope to keep in closer contact with Linda and all our family members and to appreciate all of them. We want to be more sensitive to one another's feelings and even to reach out to the truck driver who was involved in the accident. We've learned not to put off until tomorrow what we should do today. We'll all remember Tim with gratitude and love. He taught us many worthwhile lessons.



Divorce and Letting Go

By Joseph P. Whiteside

When I found out my wife wanted a divorce, there was such an awful ache in my stomach. I realized I was losing something very precious to me.

What hurt more, she didn't have the strength to tell me face to face. I would have done anything to keep her. My family was there for me. They talked to me and listened to me when I needed it most. I learned something very important to me. I learned I had a lot of inner strength. Thrcugh it all I learned I am a very good and caring person. I have a long way to go but I am learning to live without her. I am learning how to write checks to pay the bills. I am starting to enjoy times with my friends and times when I am alone.

One of the hardest things of all was letting go of her family.

We didn't discuss our problems or what was bothering each of us. We got angry with each other easily.

I think after your divorce and before another relationship you should understand what you want in a friend. I think a lot of times when people get a divorce they rush into a relationship, but they are not ready and it ends with two people getting very hurt. It helps if you really feel good about yourself and can talk with a new friend. You are going to

talk about the way things were with your "ex," but you need to learn that the past isn't everything in life. You've got to go on. The longer you are divorced the less you will talk about your "ex," and eventually you will forgive and forget.

One of the hardest things of all was letting go of her family, and realizing I wouldn't see them any more. I really cared about her people and I hope they felt the same about me.

This is the end of an era and I must go on.

Choice

By Juan P. Garcia

WELCOME TO THE WALLS, where you lose your freedom and your CHOICE. What a way to learn! I can remember my father telling me, "If you play with fire, sooner or later you are going to burn yourself." My answer was "Dad, if you play safely you will be okay, so the way it looks I didn't play safe enough."

I was standing in the line waiting for my tray of food. Everybody in front of me was complaining about the food. I finally got my tray and sat down and started to eat. I asked the guy next to me, "What is this?" And his answer was, "Your guess is as good as mine. Just close your eyes and eat. If you don't it is up to you, but we don't get fed for

another twelve hours." When I was eating I thought about CHOICE. If I was out of here, just imagine how many CHOICES of food I would have. My mind got tired thinking about those CHOICES.

I got established in prison and they furnished me with two pairs of pants, two shirts, five pairs of undershorts, five undershirts and five pairs of socks. They gave me the package with the clothes and I went to my cell; then I looked at the items I had received. Everything looked like it had been around for a hundred years. Some of the clothes were twice my size. The only good thing about this was we all were dealing with the same problem. What I liked the most was that we were all the same color. I looked at myself and I thought, "What a CHOICE, going from silk to cotton." I said to myself, "If I was out of here, just think what I would be wearing, all those CHOICES, all the expensive clothes that I paid hundreds of dollars for. Look at me now, no CHOICE." Also included in the package was a big thick book. On the first page were the rules, and it said don't break them.

If I was out of here, just think what I would be wearing—all those CHOICES.

The night came and it was time to go to bed. I lay down on my two-inch-thick mattress, full of holes, on a hard metal bed. My back hurt even before I lay on the bed. The night was cold. I felt like a chicken without feathers in the middle of a blizzard. All I had to cover with was a bluish-gray blanket, no better than the mattress, full of holes. Who knows how many bodies had been covered

with it? No CHOICE. You either covered yourself with it or froze to death. I put it over my head and I thought about all those CHOICES I used to have. When I was home I could choose my nice warm water bed, my regular bed, the nice soft couch or even the nice puffy carpet. What CHOICE! I have learned to give up all those material things that people kill each other for every day. Why go through all this? You can just do it the simple way by making the right CHOICE, the simple CHOICE of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Citizenship

The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

By Dan Hamilton

Being born in the U.S., a person has the right and responsibility to learn as much as he or she can about our country. Things to be learned should include our constitution, the laws governing our nation, our presidents, and what they stand for.

I think as a citizen you have the responsibility to serve your country.

I think as a citizen you have the responsibility to serve your country, like enlisting in the military, or getting out and doing something for your community such as keeping your streets clean, picking up trash when you see it, and calling the police when you see something wrong. When you do something for your community you feel good about yourself, and when you feel good about yourself it will carry on to your other jobs. The biggest thing is to get out and VOTE. If you don't vote you don't have the right to complain about the way things are run.

Whatever can be recycled should be. . . . It saves on the landfills.

Being a good citizen means being a good neighbor, talking to neighbors to see if they are okay, and helping your older neighbors out when there is a lot of snow at the end of the driveway. Paying your bills on time and being a good role model in your community are desirable. When people see you doing a good job, they look up to you and they try to do a good job like you. Give feedback to your officials. That way they know what they can do for you; they know how to better themselves, and how to better serve their constituents. If you don't like the way your officials are doing their jobs, run for offices yourself. Get involved in your community, be a good person, and get out and vote.

What do you need to know to be a good citizen? How do you vote, where do you vote, and how do you register to vote? Be informed on the issues.

What are the issues facing your community and states? Be literate and educated so you understand the issues. Learn the history and background of your locality. What are the needs of your community? Most of all know who your candidates are and what they stand for.

Citizenship responsibility is everyone getting involved in their community; for example, recycle! Whatever can be recycled should be: for example, cans, glass, plastic, newspapers, and cardboard. It saves on the landfills.

Everyone should be law abiding so we can cut down on crime in our community. I think if

everyone would get involved in solving community problems, we would have fewer problems. Things to do include reporting crimes to police, keeping the community clean, getting involved in the political process in your community, such as voting. When you vote you have the right to say what goes on in your community, and who runs your community.

I'm glad that Literacy Volunteers of America is here because it has done so much for people in all walks of life. When you read a newspaper, for instance, you get to know what is going on in the world. You find out what is going on in your community; for example, what is on at the movies, what is on sale at the local grocery stores and department stores. It tells you what your candidates are doing and not doing. Reading is just so essential in our lives nowadays! Just to get a job you need to read to fill out a job application.

Just writing a letter means so much to someone that couldn't write before getting help from LVA.

Literacy Volunteers of America teaches students to write too. That goes along with reading. You can write a letter to someone you love for the first time. You can write letters to your officials to let them know what you think of certain issues that concern you. You can write letters to the newspaper. Just writing a letter means so much to someone that couldn't write before getting help from LVA. This is how LVA is involved in our state and our community.

At the Fourth Annual Adult Literacy Congress in Washington, D.C., we who were delegates from

our home states came up with the following ideas:

1. Have students ask to have ballots distributed to all tutors of adult new learners and to make them available to the public through advertising on national, state or local races.
2. Encourage students to volunteer to work on local campaigns and run for office.
3. Ask local providers to get all sides of issues presented on local access television and radio and meet with local candidates.
4. Have students arrange for tutors to help them register to vote, or have voter registration at local literacy offices and walk them through voting procedures.

We worked hard to come up with these ideas and a few more. It is hoped that if these ideas were used the result would be better understanding of our citizenship responsibilities.

Citizenship: The Right to Voice Your Opinion

Anonymous

I have experienced giving my own input on three different issues concerning the neighborhood community I live in. The first experience I had involved a neighbor who was requesting a property zoning change from residential to commercial. The setting I live in is peaceful and wooded, and has an abundance of birds and natural wildlife. To change the zoning in this area would disrupt the community with additional and unnecessary noise and traffic. I personally was against the zoning change in this area.

The second issue was a request to move the Saw Dust City Days festival grounds from Carson Park to the Lowes Creek County Park. This particular issue turned out to be a two-year battle for me, since I was responsible for generating a petition against the proposal. There were civic groups and private organizations with large donations of money funding this program. There was also a lot of favoritism from our own county government supporting these groups. The biggest danger of this move would be the consumption of alcohol by adults and minors. It has been proven that these types of gatherings lead to dangerous accidents. After two years of compiling information, the one

This particular issue turned out to be a two-year battle for me, since I was responsible for generating a petition against the proposal.

piece of evidence that stopped this move was ground water contamination. This particular site was previously used for a hazardous waste dumping grounds. The Department of Natural Resources had evidence that the property was not even safe to stand on.

The third neighborhood experience I had was supporting the closure of a steep hill for local traffic. There had been many accidents and one serious injury. The most urgent concern was the safety of children in the neighborhood. I personally wrote letters on these issues and attended public hearings. All three issues were defeated in our favor.

I strongly feel working together and getting involved shows good citizenship.

I Can Make A Difference

By Songhee Gardner

To exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, you have to be able to focus on what is going on around you. I believe that one vote can change a lot, and also you are able to express your opinions.

It is very easy to get information from the media, but I wonder how much information is from

the candidate and not opinions of the editors or reporters.

Today is an election day for Chippewa. I only voted once when I was in Korea, but I took time to go to a rally. The candidate I supported never won the election, but I really believed she was the right person at that point.

I have a son who goes to a private Christian school. . . . I pay school tax and also tuition for school.

I have a son who goes to a private Christian school, and I really believe that it's the best I can do for his future. I pay school tax and also tuition for school. I understand that I can't deduct private school tuition from income tax. I would like to support a candidate willing to have us not pay school tax, or to help make a law to deduct tuition from income tax.

I am a citizen of the United States of America, and I have the right to vote and responsibilities concerning what I vote for. I believe that even one single vote can change our future.

Work and Recreation

The Fawn

By Glenn Gawrysiak

The dew sparkles.
Close to me
The fawn lies in the grass
Yellow-gold eyes glowing.

On top of the ridge
Near the corn field, waiting,
Gathering the scent
So near we could touch.

Standing quietly
Breathing slowly, keeping steady eyes
As the wind swishes through the corn tassels
We watch the sun rise
Above the trees.

The Challenge of Farming

By Randy Steinmetz

Before we bought the farm we rented it for two years. It was run down and needed repairs. I spent many hours cleaning not only the house but the barn as well. The third year we decided to buy and took out a loan.

In order to become a good farmer I took classes to keep me updated on farming, and I took advice from other farmers. We had no equipment and had to start from scratch. Our parents helped us out, but it was a difficult journey ahead of us.

Another misfortune was that our well went dry and we had to dig several holes before we found water.

We tried our best to make it work. A lot of time and energy went into our efforts. Many difficulties faced us. Some of the problems we faced were redoing the whole barn, improving the house and buying equipment. Another misfortune was that our well went dry and we had to dig several holes before we found water. This was a costly project. It taught us, though, to appreciate water and not take it for granted.

For nine years we struggled to make ends meet. It seemed that we were always in debt and realized that small farmers were pushed out by large corporations, so it was decided by me and my family members that it would be best to sell. The biggest reason for selling was that my wife died.

Even though I discontinued farming, I learned some valuable lessons. One of these is an appreciation of the land and the people with whom I worked. Having to face and overcome difficulties helped me become more confident and self-reliant.

After selling the farm I went to work for Miller's Nursery. One day I got a call from the Chippewa Manor asking if I'd care to come in for an interview. I accepted the invitation. The interview went well and I was offered the job. I've been a nursing assistant for seven years and hope to continue many more. Even though I enjoyed farming, I find taking care of the sick and elderly more rewarding.

Homecare Service

By Roberta Schneider

The homecare business is a challenging occupation that keeps the worker busy. There is a variety of important tasks that the elderly and the handicapped can't do for themselves.

It is very essential for the elderly and the handicapped to have a good personal appearance. It makes them feel good about themselves and how other people react towards them. The homecare worker gives them help by fixing their hair, getting them dressed and bathing them.

It takes a special person who has the ability to be firm but kind.

Unlike us, the handicapped can't always feed themselves. It's the homecare giver's responsibility to make sure that they are fed. Sometimes the caregiver has to cook the meal that they would like to eat.

Cleaning the house takes up most of your time. You have to dust, vacuum the carpeted floors, sweep and mop the tile floors, do the dishes, clean the cupboards, counter tops, and refrigerator, clean the bathrooms, wash the windows, make the beds, and do the laundry. Sometimes you even have to clean the oven. Sometimes they may not have the supplies you normally use, and you will have to use what they have. If they don't have a mop you have to use a rag.

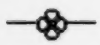
When you go to the grocery store or a shopping mall with the client, you have to help them read labels or help them to find a certain product. When you get back you help them put their groceries away.

Sometimes going to the mall is a good way to give your client companionship.

Sometimes going to the mall is a good way to give your client companionship. It's fun for them to walk around, or just sit there for a while and watch other people do their shopping. It's important for caregivers to watch clients to see if they can get around without any problems. They have to rest more than non-handicapped people would have to. It's important to contact the office if anything goes wrong.

A homecare worker has to have a lot of patience and understanding. It isn't an easy job. It can be

frustrating. It takes a special person who has the ability to be firm but kind. A person who can remain calm, and not get upset when the client is difficult, is the kind who is qualified to do the job of a homecare giver.



Christmas Time in a Nursing Home

By Henry Thode

As December rolls around, time seems to grow short with Christmas approaching. There are more things to do, such as the planning of meals. It's a busy time.

It is the time of year when families come to see their loved ones who are in nursing homes. As Christmas nears, they will make time, although their visits may be rare the rest of the year. I think they feel guilty about staying away, giving the excuse, "We don't have time."

In the evening it gets so quiet that you think the world stops.

Why don't they have time to come when a loved on is alive, but find time to go to the funeral? Many residents don't have anyone that comes to see them at all.

My home in Fairchild may have been small and old, but the care was there as well as love for each and every one. We helped the residents shop for clothes and personal items. There was a small church group which came at Christmas and

throughout the year, yet we had a hard time getting other groups involved on a regular basis.

The best thing to do on Christmas Eve is to go to bed early and sleep the loneliness away.

The home in Altoona was the same way. In the afternoon of the 24th, we would have the Christmas party. In Altoona, we would have a bigger turnout of people than in Fairchild. As soon as the program was over, the coffee and sweets were served. Then the people would leave. By five o'clock, no one was left and it was back to normal.

In the evening it gets so quiet that you think the world stops. It is a very lonely feeling. You feel that nobody cares about you. So the best thing to do on Christmas Eve is to go to bed early and sleep the loneliness away. On Christmas day, a few families come over to take family members home for dinner. In Altoona, more residents were able to go home on Christmas than in Fairchild.

This is a very hard time of the year for people in the nursing home, for anyone who is single or for those that have no one to stop in.

School and Life in Eau Claire

By Robert Schecklman

I lived in Marshfield for five years but I moved here ten months ago. The people here are friendlier. The main reason I moved here is that I live only two blocks from Shopko and I can get out on the bus to come down here. I was coming down to the

library twice a week. I came down for school Tuesdays and Thursdays. I like going to the YMCA so I can get my exercise. I go to a church for dinner twice a week. Next month I'll go three times a week.

I saw a sign up at Sacred Heart for volunteer work. I hope to work there in the food pantry again.

I started school in September on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We worked on the computér on Thursdays and I enjoyed that. I really want to learn to read and write. I only went to the eighth grade. I wasn't smart enough to go to high school.

I saw a sign up at Sacred Heart for volunteer work. I had worked in the food pantry before. I hope to get in there again. I feel better doing something.

Well, for years I had hammer toes. In January, I had two straightened. Pretty soon I'll have all straight toes for the first time. I didn't think that would ever happen.

I got a tape player for the handicapped and the blind. They send me tapes and I listen to them. I enjoy that. I had some tapes about cooking. Some tapes are interesting, some are not. About Christmas, I had one about *Gone with the Wind*. That was a good one. I had one about Grace Kelly, too.

I know more about her than before. I like the ones that have books that I get here so I can follow along. I like coming down here on Wednesdays to go to school. I feel better when I go home. I want to learn to write a letter. That's something I've never been able to do.

A Day in School

By Judy Bell

This story took place in 1951 in Wisconsin.

When I entered high school my desire was to take a woodshop class, because all my life I wanted to work with wood. To my surprise I was told I needed more help in reading and math. "Forget woodwork for a while," they said. After two years I could take my woodwork class. I kept up with all my classes, but I dearly loved to work with wood. To this day I still play around with wood.

Exciting Things To Do

By Dorothy Heisler

I was raised in New Richmond until I was 32. I liked to play baseball and go on picnics with relatives. My dad took us on rides in the country and to small towns.

When I was growing up, I went to lots of parades. My family and I went to the Osceola parade and fair and saw the exhibits.

A lady friend took me to the Glenwood City fair. I saw needlepoint, leatherwork and baked goods like cakes, cookies and bread.

My sister and I and a friend went to the Minnesota fair. We saw Indian singers, and they danced.

Friends in Church

By Connie Lew

The people I go to church with are real nice. The people at church are friendly. On Tuesday nights once a month I go to Bible study. There are a lot of different kinds of people there. Last Sunday we had a board meeting. We talked about how we are fixing up the church. Our next thing is the kitchen.

We switch names around to get pen pals every year. My pen pal is Barb. She is really nice. I haven't gotten a letter yet since we just started. One lady has my name who hauls me to Bible study sometimes. She doesn't live too far from me.

The couple I go to church with take me to the doctor. They had me to their house for New Year's for dinner. This couple likes to tease me. One time the man told me I had to sit between them because she couldn't behave herself. Last Sunday, the youths gave church service. They did one part in sign language.

Last Sunday, the youths did one part of the church service in sign language.

We are going to have a Valentine's party. We are going to exchange Valentines. I think I'm going to buy mine. We're going to have cake and stuff, I guess. Then we're going to have a meal.

Sometimes the pastors can really be funny. We just sit there and laugh. And we got a lot of people joining from another church. I watch my money

so I have enough for church service on Sunday. I and the group I'm in have to bring something sometimes, like ice cream.

The people there don't pick on me or say anything bad because I'm handicapped. There are a lot of handicapped people there. Just the little things like the pastor saying hello make me feel good.

The Story of My Life

By Susann Rivers

I have been in the LVA program for three years. I'm happy to be in the program. I enjoy seeing my tutor. I am glad she takes time out of her busy life to teach me how to read. I am thankful that every day I can wake up in the morning, I'm here and living.

Some of my hobbies are watching television and helping my sister make rugs by cutting rags into strips. I like being able to have a few laughs with my girl friend.

I enjoy going to the malls for window shopping and sitting in the patio area drinking pop.

I live at the Park Towers Apartments. We have a nutrition program and today I had my favorite meal: spaghetti with meat sauce, pineapple salad and French bread.

My favorite seasons are spring and summer because I can get out more often. I enjoy going to the malls for window shopping and sitting in the patio area drinking pop. I enjoy going on picnics in the park.

Crab Legs with Blackjack

By Hwewon Suh

Every Thursday Turtle Lake Casino has a seafood buffet. They have Alaskan King Crab, but you don't have to fight it. They cut it horizontally so you can just poke it out and eat. They have large fried shrimp, large cocktail shrimp, scallops, roast beef, baked fish and so many kinds of delicious desserts that I like and a lot of salads for only $9.99!

Last time when I went there it was December 30. My husband and I went with a few Korean friends. When we got there, I got out of the car door to run to the front of the line. When my husband came from parking the car, there were already people standing behind me in line.

He brought back $55 plus the $30 for a total of $85!

Usually we wait one and a half hours, but this day we waited three hours! During the waiting my husband was bored standing, so he went to the blackjack table and said, "I'm going to earn our dinner tonight." He came back to me about an hour later. Before he left he wanted money from me and I gave him $30. He brought $55 plus the $30 for a total of $85! There were three more Korean friends, so we needed $50 plus tip. Before when we went there with my friends, the friends paid for our dinner. This is why my husband wanted to pay this time. So he won the $55, quit the blackjack tables and came back to me in line. If he lost the money it wouldn't be fun like this.

We can't go every Thursday because my husband has class on Friday morning. So we wait for vacation. I have to call the babysitter for our children, but often I call our friend's daughter and she comes. We do it during vacation for the girls' sake, too.

My friends and I took a turn to stand in line. One friend went to gamble and lost her money. One friend won some money. I toured the casino while my friend stood up in line. I want to learn blackjack like my husband, but I'm afraid to lose my money. So I can't do that.

And finally, we could eat that delicious seafood. My husband and I and three friends had to split up and sit at two different tables (otherwise we would have had to wait longer than three hours). I ate about three dishes (a couple of pounds) of crab legs. I felt sorry for the casino because we ate too much and they lost money. I wanted to eat more but couldn't, so I felt sorry for that, too. After I eat the seafood buffet, I'm not really hungry until the next day. It is very delicious and very cheap.

I really want to bring my children to eat these delicious crab legs but they aren't allowed in the casino.

Today is almost our last chance to go there during vacation. Next week my husband is going to start his class. I really want to bring my children to eat these delicious crab legs but they aren't allowed in the casino. I hope they are allowed to come in once in a while.

My Vacation

By Gary Sprinkle

Nancy and I were on vacation this summer in Colorado. One of the things we did was ride the Georgetown Loop Railroad, which takes in the Lebanon mine tour.

The train ride started in Georgetown and went to Silver Plume. Georgetown and Silver Plume are separated by just two miles. The railroad twisted and turned over four miles of track to gain the elevation of 600 feet. The bridge at Devils Gate is 300 feet long and almost 100 feet high. From the bridge you can see the track cross over itself.

We went on the Lebanon Silver Mine Tour. We put hard hats on to go in the mine. The mine was under I-70 highway, and there were three different levels. You could see the mine holes in the side of the mountain from the highway.

The miners had three candles to see by for a ten-hour day.

The mine was 44 degrees year round. The miners had three candles to see by for a ten-hour day. They had to hit a drill in this dim light. They had a changing room to change clothes in. That way the owner of the mine could see if they were taking any silver.

The Georgetown Loop Train Ride and Mine Tour was a very interesting part of our vacation.

Memories of Family Life

A Grand Woman

By Beth RedCloud

I want to tell you, as best I can, about a very grand woman. She was from a large family and was the youngest child. She married a wonderful man who had served in World War I. She lived through the Depression and raised three children. The oldest of these children was my father. She and her husband would fish, hunt, trap, and garden to put food on their table. She did all of the canning, coldpacking, cooking, cleaning, and most of the child-raising herself. Later in her life she started working at Luther Hospital and remained there for 27 years, until the arthritis in her hip stopped her. She had to have her hip replaced and so retired.

She and her husband would fish, hunt, trap, and garden to put food on their table.

I know that so far she seems like any other woman who lived through these times, but here is what made her so grand: with everything that she was doing, she took on the major part of raising her oldest son's children. When he fell on hard times, she was there to pick up the pieces of his

life and help put them back together. This was the way her heart worked. I remember many times when she did this for a number of family members. I am positive that at one time or another we all disappointed her with our decisions and actions, but she never stopped loving and supporting any of us. She was supportive of whatever we wanted in our lives. She helped me decide to go back to school to get my G.E.D. She was so proud when I passed my first test. We decided that we would celebrate my graduation with a catfish supper, which was one of our favorite meals.

She helped me decide to go back to school to get my G.E.D.

We spent a lot of time together talking. Sometimes I only had enough time to drink one cup of coffee and to set her hair, but it was time that can never be replaced. She passed on to be with my grandfather just before last Thanksgiving

She left me with a lifetime of inspiration and memories. To anyone who was her friend, family, or acquaintance, she left a heart full of love. She was a Grand Friend; a Grand Wife; a Grand Mom; a Grandmother; and to anyone who knew her she was a Grand Woman. Grandma's memory lives on through all our hearts. Though she is not here on this earth to support us, to help pick up the pieces of our lives, or just to say "I Love You," she is with us. She is in the snow or the rain that falls and she whispers "I Love You" in the warm summer wind. She was and always will be a Grand Woman.

Will to Live

By Kristin Dawson

My Great-Grandma was the greatest Grandma in my eyes. She taught me a lot of things the old-fashioned way. When I was younger, I always told her I wanted to name my first child after her. She would always laugh at me.

When I was eighteen, I got pregnant out of wedlock. I was not with the father at all. My Great-Grandma was in a nursing home. Her name is Clara. She was very sick, and she was eighty-five years old.

Everyone told me, "If you tell your grandma that you're pregnant, it will break her heart." Well, I knew I had to tell her myself. I went to the nursing home to tell her. We were talking for a while; then she looked at me and said, "Kristin, you're pregnant, aren't you?" I stared at her; she looked so fragile lying there in her bed. When I asked her how she knew, she said that Grandmas know everything. We both laughed.

When I asked her how she knew, she said that Grandmas know everything.

We talked about the father and my plans about the baby. Clara grabbed my hand and said, "Kristin, I know you will do just fine." I started to cry. I needed to have Clara's approval. It took me a long time to come up with a appropriate name if I had a girl.

In July, Clara got worse and she needed help to do everything. She looked so tired all the time. I

was worried that she was going to give up and leave me. On December 4, I went in to see her. She looked very sick and had no strength to even sit up. Seeing her like that really scared me more than ever.

I started labor that night. On December 6, 1985, I gave birth to a seven pound baby girl. I couldn't even wait for the doctors to finish cleaning me up. I wanted the phone right then to call Clara. I called her, but I could hardly hear her voice. I said, "Grandma, guess who I am holding in my arms?" I said, "Her name is Claralyn."

Clara was sitting straight up all by herself. She looked great.

She yelled, "No way! I don't believe you!"

We checked out of the hospital and we went straight to see Grandma. We walked in, and I could not believe my eyes! Clara was sitting straight up all by herself. She looked great.

I let her hold Claralyn, and my grandma gleamed. We then put Clara in a wheelchair and put Claralyn in her arms and wheeled her all around the nursing home. A nurse stopped us and asked Grandma, "Who is this?" Grandma said "This is my great, great name-child." You could see her face light up with joy when she said that.

Clara passed away peacefully in her sleep April 16, 1986. Claralyn gave her great-great-grandma the will to live longer. I will never forget how young she looked that day I walked into her room with her name-child in my arms.

All About My Grandpa

By Carol Weinhardt

My Grandpa is the special person in my life. Grandpa and I were very close before he died. My Grandpa and Grandma were one of the first ones to ship cows milk to market. When we were all younger, I can remember that at one place we moved to, we were raising sheep. When we moved again my Grandpa and Grandma were raising rabbits and cows. At one time they had up to 200 rabbits. Then we had a barn fire. We could only get about 50 to 100 rabbits out, and all of the cows. Then we tried to get the rest of the rabbits, but it was too late.

When my Dad and step-Mom got married, Grandpa gave them some property. The four of us moved into a house trailer. Grandpa and Grandma built a house and a pole barn right across the road from us. He put the rabbits in the barn. Some of them were for show, for meat, and for pets. At this farm they raised pigeons, too. Until I let them go.

At this farm they raised pigeons, too. Until I let them go.

I can remember that when I was younger, I used to watch my Grandpa butcher rabbits. That is how I know how to butcher rabbits two different ways. One morning when my Grandpa was walking down to the barn, he heard some strange noises coming from the barn. He quick ran down to see what was going on. He saw, through the window, three dogs killing the rabbits, so he ran to the house

and grabbed his gun, ran back down, and shot two of them. The other one was wounded but got away. They did two hundred dollars in damage. He found out that they were the neighbors' hunting dogs.

A few years later my Grandpa had bought a brown Maverick car. He fell asleep at the wheel and was in a car accident. From what the doctor said, he had a stroke. After a few months he got well, like it never happened.

About ten years ago, when my Grandpa and Grandma and step-Mom were getting ready to go to town, he was supposed to start the car while Grandma was in the house getting ready. Mom was at home getting ready, too. My Grandma was wondering why she didn't hear the car going yet, so she looked out her window and noticed Grandpa hunched over the steering wheel. She quick called over to our house and told Mom about my Grandpa. So Mom went over, and they both got him into the house and called the ambulance. It took him to the hospital. He had another stroke. After this one he couldn't talk very well. He lost most of the feeling on his right side.

He was a very nice, but strict, Grandpa. I loved him dearly.

I moved to my real mom's in Wisconsin in 1981. In 1982, we got a phone call in the middle of the night, from my Dad. He told my mom to get us kids there right away because the doctor said that Grandpa wouldn't make it through the night. Mom got us up and had to pack for the eight-hour trip. We left at 3:30 a.m. and got to the Michigan border

at about 8:30 a.m. We stopped at a restaurant for breakfast, and my mom called Dad to see how Grandpa was doing. By that time, he was already gone. It was like he was waiting for us to get to Michigan; when he heard we were on our way, he died. It was two weeks before Christmas. I had already sent his Christmas present, but he never got it. He was a very nice, but strict, Grandpa. I loved him dearly.

The Best Parents

By Marie Schumacher

I want to dedicate this story to my parents for giving and showing me their love and caring, and for all they did while I was growing up. They were always there if I was sick or when I was hurt. They always made sure I did my homework. Thank God for such wonderful parents like mine.

We were playing hide-and-seek. Dad went up the T.V. pole and we couldn't find him for a while.

I remember one time we were playing hide-and-seek and ran around the house after Dad. He went up the T.V. pole and we couldn't find him for a while. Finally we found him on top of the roof. I will never forget that. Whenever Mom made cookies we would get into the dough, and then she would say, "Get out of there, that's for my cookies." I guess I kind of miss being little again but I'm also glad I'm grown up.

Most of all I want to thank my parents for just being parents and helping me.

You would say my parents are kind of protective of me. They don't want anybody to hurt me. When I have children of my own I'll be watching out for them, care for them, and be there when they really need me.

I remember when I first moved away from home how upset my Mom was. She didn't want me to leave home. I don't think Dad wanted me to either, he just did not show it. But here I am in Eau Claire all on my own.

Most of all I want to thank my parents for just being parents and helping me, because if it weren't for them I wouldn't be where I am today. So Mom and Dad, thank you for teaching me the right way and also for being my special friends. I love you with all my heart. Your daughter, Marie Schumacher.

Celebrating Christmas

By Pam Frank

Christmas is my favorite holiday. There are many reasons I like Christmas. It's special time to be home with family. I enjoy seeing all the Christmas decorations. I also enjoy exchanging gifts. It's fun watching the TV shows and specials.

My mom always puts up Christmas decorations. I like them. She usually puts them up around the second week of December. She puts

birds on the Christmas tree. They are white stuffed birds. They are my favorite. We have a homemade Santa that is made from yarn. It always goes on the TV. We've had the Santa for many years. My mom puts lights around the roof of the garage. They are all different colors.

My mom puts white stuffed birds on the Christmas tree and lights around the roof of the garage.

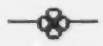
I exchange gifts with my son at Christmas. I gave my son a computer game this year for Christmas. He likes to play computer games. This one is his favorite now. It has music. He gave me a music box. It has four carousel horses on it. The song it plays is "It's a Small World." We always exchange our gifts on Christmas morning.

My grandma and great-aunt, Eunice, come to visit on Christmas Eve. They usually arrive around 1 p.m. We sometimes begin our visit with a Christmas drink. We spend time visiting and talking. We exchange gifts with each other. They go back home around 11 or 11:30 p.m. They live in Eau Claire, so they don't have too far to drive.

I enjoy watching Christmas specials on TV. One of my favorites is "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" by Dr. Seuss. I also like to watch the school kids in their school programs on the Public Access Channel. "Mickey's Christmas Carol" and "Charlie Brown's Christmas" are two others I enjoy watching.

Sometimes I make pumpkin pie at Christmas. Usually my mom helps. She makes the crust. While she does that, I make the filling. I use canned pumpkin in my pie. The recipe I use is from my

grandma. This year we made two pies because we had extra company coming. I learned that making two pies at one time is just too hard. From now on I will make one pie at a time.



Me and My Dad

By Kathy Kierstead

We do things a lot. Sometimes we argue a lot. He tells me what's right and wrong. When I was a baby, he'd hold me and feed me. We went for rides. We sang in the truck, went to the bar. He'd have beer and I'd have a pop. He'd take me fishing. Then we went on a trip down to see my sister on my birthday. I'd wait up for my dad to come home from work.

We had good memories. I still love my dad. Thank you, Dad. Thanks for being there with me. It was hard to see you die.

I still remember him, the bad and the good. I want to come back home. I'm all grown up now. I should be on my own at the group home. I promise I'll be good. I'm happy about where you are now, Dad. I get along with my mother. I really love her. I promise I'll work every day. Just in case something would happen to my mother, I want Jane and Clyde to be there with me. I'll be all right.

My Dream

By Brenda Colon

When I was about twelve years old I wanted to live in the mountains. I am now 28 years old. When I was younger my family took my sister and me to Montana. It was the most beautiful place I have ever been. There were lots of wild animals out there in the mountains. The mountains look nice covered with snow. It makes you feel like you can reach out and touch them. I am hoping to move out there. It has always been my dream.

Pony

By Cindy Motzer

I remember that I had a pony when I was about four years of age. It was a gentle one to ride. I could ride with a saddle or on its back. Pony would let me ride for hours on hours. My parents would wonder where I was. If I didn't answer their call, they would know where to find me. I would be riding on Pony! It was so much fun!

Pony was a friend to me. Sometimes my brothers would take Pony out and ride him, but Pony would not let them ride for as long a time as he let me. He was my pony. Pony would let them

help me ride by letting them lead me.

Pony was a pal that I could talk things over with. He liked to be talked to and liked the sweet treat that I would bring with me. I was nice and friendly to him. He knew that by the way I talked to him. Sometimes I would just take the reins and go for walks with Pony in the yard. Pony liked to be free to do what he wanted by himself.

Pony was a pal. . . . He liked to be talked to and liked the sweet treat that I would bring with me.

Pony would stay in the yard with the front gate closed. Pony would eat some of the grass and he would eat the other stuff that little ponies eat. I could feed Pony all by myself.

Sometimes Dad would be close by but would try not to be seen by me. Whenever I wanted to be alone, I would go to see Pony. Pony was glad to see me. He would whinny at me. I would brush him all over his body. Pony liked that a lot. He was a fast runner. He would go for hours just running in the fenced yard that I had for him. Pony was a good pony. He liked to be ridden on. It made him feel good and important to be useful.

One day I got mad at my parents because they told me that Pony had to go away. They said that we could not pay for his feed. They were going to give him to a friend of theirs.

My parents told me that Pony had to go away because we could not pay for his feed.

He had other ponies that worked the carnival. Pony would have a good life. He would make other little boys and girls happy. It was a very sad day when a man came and got Pony. I cried so much that I got a stomach ache over it. My parents were upset because I was upset.

About a week later Dad called the man on the phone and asked him if he could bring me over to see Pony. The man said that the whole family could come to the carnival and see Pony. Pony was happy to see me! I was happy to see him, too. I got on Pony and Dad had to take me off. I wanted to keep Pony but Dad said it was better that Pony was where he was.

Dad took us all home and I cried again so much that I got sick. I never stopped missing Pony!

Kelly's Ring

By Maria L. Jimenez

In 1986 we found Kelly's ring in a New York restaurant. We were living in New York at the time, and Kelly was a friend there that we had not seen for a while. That night we went for supper. We paid the check and left. On the way home the girls were talking about how beautiful the ring was and how big it was for their fingers. So I turned around and asked them, "What are you talking about?"

They said to me, "Mom, look! We found this ring at the restaurant when we went to the bathroom, but it is too big for us." I asked them to let me see it. My husband looked at me and I looked at him and we were speechless. We were too far away to turn back. It was Kelly's graduation

ring. It was very beautiful, and inside the ring were her initials. On the outside of her ring, around the stone, it had the name of the school and the year she graduated.

We went back the following weekend to the same restaurant, and we spoke to the manager. We asked him if he knew Kelly. He said that he knew her, but not very well because she had only worked there a few months. He told us that he knew she had gone back to college. However, he didn't know where Kelly was going to school.

Two months went by, and finally we found the school that she had graduated from. We went there, and asked the secretary if she would help us find information about Kelly. We gave her all the information we had. She looked at her old school records, but didn't have anything new to add. She told us that she didn't know where Kelly was going to school. We kept searching for the owner, but we ended up in a dead end. We placed ads in newspapers. We received calls, but when I would ask the person to describe the ring the caller did not give me the right description. After that my husband got transferred, so we kept the ring. The time came when we had to order our own daughter's ring, and we remembered that we still had Kelly's ring. So my husband told me we had to find her.

We were speechless. It was Kelly's graduation ring.

So we started with the phone calls again. One of the phone calls was to the school where she graduated. I told the receptionist that we tried to

find Kelly before because we had her graduation ring, and that we would like very much to give the ring back to her.

She said, "Let me make a few phone calls. I think we can help you." I asked her to go back to her old school records in order to find out if they had a phone number from Kelly's family. They might know where Kelly was now. Two or three weeks went by. We started to give up, but that morning the phone rang and it was from the school. They told me that they had found Kelly and that she would call me later that day.

The secretary didn't know where Kelly was going to school. We kept searching.

Kelly did call and she was so happy. She told me that she tried to find the ring, too, for the first two years by placing ads in the newspaper, but she gave up after that. I talked to her for a few minutes and then asked her to describe the ring, which she did. Then I knew she was the owner for sure. Three weeks later I received a thank you card from her telling us how happy she was. We were so happy, too, that we had found her. She also said that she couldn't believe that we had taken the time to care, and that after seven years of searching off and on for Kelly we found her.

Joys and Trials of Parenthood

My Kids

By Sandra Person

I have two kids, Kari and Blazej.

I want both kids to learn schoolwork.

I like to play with them.

Making both of them laugh makes me happy.

I like to read to them, and Kari reads to me,

We sometimes talk together and sometimes talk one on one.

Blazej cleans the table and sink if he wants to.

Loving, Sharing, and Caring

By Donna R. Bauer

You need love. You like to be loved, and to give love to other members of your family. Families do things for each other and for themselves. You need love, caring, understanding by parents, friends, and families.

I am a single parent to one child that is living with me, and a nine-year-old son named Ross. He goes to school at Park School. He gets a lot of care, love, and understanding. He is a wonderful person and we love him a lot. He is doing very well in school. Ashley is four years old now. She goes to preschool on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays all day. She likes it a lot. She goes to the YMCA on those three days. I am thankful for my two wonderful children.

My "Miracle" Baby

By Kathy Davison

On June 14, 1991, at 4:30 p.m., I arrived at Luther Hospital's Emergency Room to have my baby. After being registered and admitted, I was taken up to the Birth Center. Upon my arrival the staff checked me in.

After hearing the test results, I began to cry.

After getting into my room, I was hooked up to the fetal monitor and IV's. I was in misery and a lot of pain because of my strong contractions. My nurse for the night came into my room, along with my doctor, at 8:30 p.m. to do a cone test to see why my baby wasn't descending down the birthing canal to be born. At this time I was glad that my baby's father was with me in the room to comfort me. Actually, I was surprised that he had a hand left after the test; I squeezed it quite hard because of the pain associated with this particular test. Needless to say, the test was unsuccessful.

After hearing the test results I began to cry. I was wondering why my baby wasn't getting to be born the "normal" way like my two girls. I was very, very scared by this time. At 10:30 p.m. my doctor came into my room and told me, "Your baby won't live unless we perform an operation called a C-section." My reply was "I had a feeling for some reason, all during this pregnancy, that I was going to have an operation." I guess women's intuition was with me up to this point.

I remember the doctors and nurse having me sign a bunch of paperwork and hooking up another IV for the medicine to put me to sleep, as well as me fighting the gas mask they put over my face. I was very scared at this point. I wondered, "Is my baby going to be born problem-free? Am I going to come out of the anesthetic okay?"

I then woke up at 3:55 a.m. to the sound of my doctor telling me that my son was born having

"Your son isn't doing very well on the ventilator; we're going to have to perform another operation."

aspirated meconium, and he wasn't breathing very well, causing a lack of oxygen to his brain at birth. I looked at her, and all I could say was, "Is he going to make it?" She then told me, "He will, but if you want to see him before he gets medivaced [taken by helicopter] to the Twin Cities, you need to roll over now!" I then proceeded to roll over as quickly as I was able to, so that I could see my beautiful little boy before he was taken from me. I saw my baby for only five minutes before I was "losing my mind" as I watched the paramedics, doctor and nurse wheel my son out in an infant incubator.

After my son was gone, I couldn't do very much sleeping, eating, etc., because I was preoccupied, wondering "Is he going to make it? What can I do to help him? Why did this have to happen to me? What did I do wrong to cause this?" At this point I had little, if any, "self-esteem." As I was slowly coming around more, I got a phone call at 5:15 a.m. from a doctor at Minneapolis Children's Hospital, saying "Your son isn't doing very well on the ventilator; we're going to have to perform another operation in order for him to live." I said, "What happens if we don't operate?" The reply was, "He'll die." I said, "If it's my only option for him to live, then do the operation."

The operation that was performed on my son, Mathew Jordan, was called the "ECHMO" machine operation, meaning the "artificial" heart and lung machine. The process involves the baby's being put to sleep, hooked up to a respirator, a ventilator,

the ECHMO machine, a heart monitor, a temperature probe, and all kinds of other equipment. It takes about two to three hours for the operation.

Imagine a little baby, my "miracle" baby, having to go through so much when he's only five to seven hours old. I myself, to this day, can't even begin to put myself in his "shoes." It's too painful for a parent to see their own flesh and blood go through something like that. Mathew ended up spending the first two and a half weeks of his life in Minneapolis. I was told by the doctors in the Cities that if my son had been born three years earlier, in 1988, he wouldn't have lived. Thank God for modern medicine.

The day he was brought home to Luther Hospital was the happiest day of my family's life. My two girls got to see their baby brother for the very first time, and I was a little more at ease knowing he was at home.

If my son had been born three years earlier, he wouldn't have lived. Thank God for modern medicine.

Even after two and a half years I still find myself wondering if I would be able to cope with this heartache again, of seeing someone so innocent hooked up to so much medical equipment just to survive.

I wouldn't trade my son, Mathew, for anything. He is unique in his own little special way! Now, at the age of two and a half, he is involved with the Development and Training Center for his disability. He's a little trooper; he knows he has to

wear a brace on his leg, with hopes of correcting the problem someday. And someday I may find the courage to be able to handle all this as well as my son can.

Daddy's Girl

By Mendell Stokes

My daughter is one year old. Brittany Joy Stokes was born September 4, 1992. She was not expected for four more months. I was not there at the time of her birth, as I was out looking for a job for when I got out of school. When I heard the great news, I darn near jumped to the moon.

It was hard to believe because her mother was only five months pregnant. My daughter's grandmother explained what happened. I had to calm myself down before I went to the hospital. When I arrived there, I immediately went to where the babies were kept just after birth, to find my daughter. There she lay, looking like her mother. Brittany was different from the other babies, though, as she was in an incubator and was hooked up to many tubes and machines.

There she lay, looking like her mother.

I sat there wondering what was wrong, and why she needed all this. Then her mother told me why that was necessary.

For the next few days I tried to understand, but it was hard for me to cope with it. Then it was time

for her mother to come home and I felt better. That wonderful feeling only lasted for a few minutes. When I saw my daughter's mother and grandmother enter the house, there was no baby with them. They explained that Brittany had to stay at the hospital to have an operation, because of some liquid on her brain. That made me sad.

After the operation she was in the hospital four more months, then was able to come home. Brittany had to return to the hospital after about six months for more surgery, and is now doing fine. She is Daddy's happy, healthy girl.

The Day Zachary Was Born

By Raeann Steen

I went into labor at about 10:00 p.m. on a Tuesday night. My sister, Julie, took me for a walk around Altoona Park. I can remember feeling a little scared and really excited.

My mom put on a pot of coffee and told me it was going to be a long night.

When we got back home my mom thought we should go to the hospital. When we got to the hospital my doctor examined me and put a heart monitor on my belly to listen to the baby's heart. Well, needless to say, I was only dilated to one. So my doctor gave me a choice to either stay at the hospital or go home. I decided to go home.

When we got home, my mom put on a pot of coffee and told me it was going to be a long night.

My mom stayed up with me to time my contractions. At about 8:00 a.m. Wednesday morning my mom took me back to the hospital. When we got settled in my room, the nurse came in and told me to walk around the floor for a while to help my contractions come closer. I walked around as long as I could, and then I went back to my room.

My doctor came later that afternoon to see how much I dilated. I was only dilated to four. Later the nurse came in and broke my water. I laid there in pain for hours and hours. Later that night I asked the nurse for some pain medicine. They tried, in both arms, to put in an IV. They got it in on the tenth time.

The doctor came in and attached a monitor to Zachary's head.

Zachary kept moving around, so the nurse had a hard time getting his heart monitored. The doctor came in and attached a monitor to Zachary's head. Early Thursday morning my heart rate and Zachary's heart rate started to drop, so the doctor decided he needed to do a C-section.

At 5:09 a.m. Thursday morning, Zachary was born, weighing eight pounds, five ounces. He was 22 inches long. He was worth all the pain.

The Best Day Ever

By Teresa Best

On December 6, 1990, I gave birth to my daughter. This was a long and hard day. I was in labor for thirty-two hours and in a lot of pain. There were some complications, but with the help of the greatest nurse and my dad we pulled through. At 3:45 p.m. I gave birth to my daughter Ashley Marie Best. I was the happiest mom! She was so pretty. I never thought I could love somebody as much as I did that instant. Most of all, I wanted to be loved by her. I feel sad that there are other women who can't share these feelings. I am pretty lucky.

My Children

By Dawn Robelia

My first child was quite an experience to give birth to. My labor started at 3:00 in the early morning. The extremely hard labor started around 6:00 that night. I went to the hospital at 9:00. My contractions were so bad and coming so quickly that I had walked the floor during the contractions, and as I went to sit down for a rest, another pain was on the way. Only one nurse had the patience

to stick by me through it all. They finally wheeled me into the delivery room, which was a blessing after 32 hours of labor. After going through the routine shots I was going for it. Delivery was easy. Steven Kyle was born at 11:05.

Only one nurse had the patience to stick by me through it all.

My second child was a breeze. At 3:00 in the afternoon the very minor contractions started. I laid on the couch expecting the worst to come. At 4:30 I knew it was time to get to the hospital. I never did get hard labor until I was in the delivery room.

The nurse kept telling me not to push until the doctor came, and that was extremely hard not to do. Little Jessie's head was showing when the doctor got there, so it was too late for routine shots. Jessica Jill was born completely naturally at 5:06.

My third child was born in the birthing chair. After five hours of not-so-minor contractions I went to the hospital. Big mistake! That gave the doctor seven hours to poke and bother me as I tried to sleep through it. In the birthing chair I did a lot of screaming. Little Joey's head was tipped up, so again I was told not to push. During a contraction you want to push, so I wasn't too nice to my doctor. After twelve hours of labor Joseph Scott was born.

My fourth child gave me a lot of energy during labor. Unbelievable energy!

My fourth child gave me a lot of energy during labor. I got the bathroom floor scrubbed and the dishes washed. Unbelievable energy! After the house was all cleaned, I went to the hospital. Another deal of being poked and bothered. The contractions started to get worse. I told the nurse

that it was getting to be time. She checked me and said "No, not for a few more hours." I told her to call my doctor, but she didn't. Seven minutes later I was rushed into the delivery room. Dustin Michael was born without too much screaming.

My fifth and last child was born a month early. I was put on monitors. As the contractions got worse I wanted the monitor off so I could walk the floor. The contractions got as bad as my first experience. There wasn't a nurse around this time that had enough patience for me. I told every nurse that came in that I wanted my tubes tied and I wasn't leaving the hospital until they were. I got remarks like "You don't mean that, you're just in pain." I meant every word. The labor and the delivery were both horrible, so I would have to say this one was the worst. After 14 hours of labor, Christina Dawn was born.

After this delivery, I was exhausted. I didn't want a shower or anything to eat. I wanted to sleep, and just leave me alone! The next day I talked to the doctor and signed the necessary papers to have my tubes tied. After five deliveries I have five beautiful children that made it all worthwhile.

Toby's School

By Judy Bell

Toby goes to preschool four days a week. The school bus picks him up about 8:20 a.m. I pick him up or he rides the bus back home.

I met Toby's teacher when he went to school in Eau Claire. I liked the way she taught Toby. Toby and Susan hit it off right from the start.

My Daughter's Life

By Pat Wedlund

I met Bill* in school. We dated for about three years. I got pregnant in high school. I was happy but had mixed feelings. My labor was hard.

After Mercedes was born my friend, Angie, helped me to take care of her more than her father did. Angie worked two jobs and still helped. Bill tried, but he yelled at the baby when she cried.

He did not stay around very much. He was not around enough to understand what she needed. He would get mad at me for her crying. I tried to get him to help take care of her by bringing him to help when Angie and I got sick with the flu. He wanted to spend more time with me than taking care of

*Not his real name.

Mercedes. He got mad and wanted to come home. So I took him home.

Later I got custody in court. We went to try mediation, because he wanted visitation rights and to manipulate me. I wanted a year of supervised visits, but he wouldn't go along with it. He wanted to have Friday through Sunday every other weekend and to bring her home at five o'clock. We went back to court before Bill turned eighteen, and he lost his attorney because he was under age. He agreed to the supervised visits, but there is a restraining order put on him. Now we are trying to figure out visitation times. Nothing has been set up yet.

Now we are trying to figure out visitation times.

It is very difficult to raise a daughter on my own, but I have help from family and friends.

A Special Gift from God

By Randy Steinmetz

Christopher, our year-old son, is a baby we long waited for. He is as precious and dear as we could have hoped. Not only do we teach him, but he teaches us too. Since Christopher is our first child, Cindy and I are anxious to learn all we can about being good parents. We hope we give good examples and are consistent in his training and in our decision making. We try to read to him as much

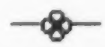
as we can. He likes different books but has no favorite one. He also looks at a lot of different pictures by himself. At dinner time he crawls up in his high chair all by himself. Christopher eats with a spoon and does really well. We try to eat at the table for meals. Christopher stays up until I go to work and then it's his bedtime. He always wants to take his blanket, his Santa bear, and cow to bed with him. When he wakes up Cindy is anxious to get him up. Christopher gets very excited.

We just love him so much, yet sometimes we seem to get short with him. We surely can see how he has grown. When we tell him to do little chores around the house he listens to us. For example, we say, "Put your toys in the box," and he does it. We tell him to be nice and he usually tries to obey pretty well. When he doesn't get his way he pouts, but we just let him go off by himself and he finally gets over it. A lot of times I feel he is testing us. We try to give him words to say and he repeats them after us. We are really careful about what we say and what we watch on TV. We want to set a good example. I have noticed how TV can affect a little child. When there is fighting he starts swinging his arms.

I have noticed how TV can affect a little child. When there is fighting, Christopher starts swinging his arms.

We see improvement in Christopher. We notice how his vocabulary is improving from reading to him. We keep him entertained by watching the movie Good Old Yeller which he likes. Christopher also loves music and one of his favorite programs is Lawrence Welk, which he dances to.

Cindy and I are trying our best to do what is right for Christopher. We listen to advice of other people but we have to make the final decisions.



A Mother's Busy Day

By Kim Saxton

A mother who goes to school has a very busy life. Some days are even busier than others. I was in school through the Family Literacy program at the YMCA and my four-year-old son was in their preschool. We went three day a week. I also had a tutor who came in and helped me on reading three days a week for two hours each day. She helped me a lot and was a friend to me.

The parents who were in this program helped out in their children's preschool class. I enjoyed being in with the kids a lot and helping out. Justin and I were both learning a lot at the YMCA and enjoying learning, too. We were both busy with school.

I was afraid he might get hurt. Sure enough, he did.

I was also busy at home taking care of the family, the dog, and the house. We had a few medical problems at that time: a broken wrist, hernia operation, sprained ankles, and bronchitis.

I'll never forget one especially busy day. It was my day off from school. I was home with Justin and babysitting my niece, Melissa. She was two years old and was highly contagious with the

chickenpox. Justin and I had already had it.

The two of them had been playing for at least forty minutes. Then I got after Justin for playing on his sisters' bunk beds, because I was afraid he might get hurt. Sure enough he did. Fifteen minutes later he fell off the top bunk. The whole house shook when he fell. He came running into the front room crying a lot. His mouth was bleeding, so I took him into the bathroom and put a cold washcloth on it.

When Justin fell off the top bunk, the whole house shook.

Then he said his arm hurt so I had to take his shirt off to get a good look. When I got his shirt off I could see that his arm was probably broken. It was sagging down and looked different in color than his other arm. So I decided that I'd better take him to the hospital. But what was I going to do with Melissa?

I had so much to do before I could even leave. I had to let the dog in and out. I hurried and changed Melissa's messy pants, found her socks and shoes and put them back on. Then I got my shoes on. I put a shirt around Justin's shoulders and put his shoes on him too. I kept hoping my sister would come soon to get Melissa, so I wouldn't have to take her to the hospital with me. They wouldn't want an energetic two-year-old running around with chickenpox. But my sister showed up by the time I was ready to leave for the hospital. I asked her to call my husband and mother and tell them what had happened. My sister took Melissa home, and I went straight to the hospital with Justin.

They looked him over and took X-rays of his arm. Both bones were broken. Then they put a cast on his arm. It took about seven hours before we could go home again. Justin is fine now, but we both wait for the next crisis in his life.

I was glad when that busy day was done.

Shine

By Emily Loken

We are like lights. Flames on candles that flicker but must never go out. So often we could say, "Why try, oh blow it out." But a snuffed flame gives no light or life at all.

Love, hope, and education can give fuel to a flame so it will never go out. Challenges, dreams to be fulfilled to let us shine. You can do it! The Family Literacy Program has enlightened me to what I can do and am capable of.

"So let's not let our lights go out. Let's all shine!"

My Ten Dreams

By Wendy Janzen

1) To graduate from CVTC in Accounting
(in the year 1997)
2) To find a well-paying job
(not have to depend on the government for help)
3) To one day, own my own home
(so if people ask if I own it, I can say "YES")
4) To have my children respect and understand other people
(not to judge on sex, race, age, or handicap)
5) To watch my children, Kyle, Tyler, and Dustin succeed in life
(go to college and have a wonderful career)
6) For my children to have everything in life
(things that I missed)
7) To be a Grandmother
(in 20 years or more)
8) Not to be a single parent
(to become a wife to my fiancé Tim)
9) To be a Step-Parent to Elijah and Andrew
(even though I act like one now)
10) HOPE MY DREAMS COME TRUE
(ALTHOUGH IT IS A TOUGH ROAD AHEAD, I WILL TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME, TO ACHIEVE MY DREAMS)

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Meeting the Challenges

Anonymous

I'm 36 years old and I've been asked to share a few years of my life with other readers.

All in all, I was brought up in a good home, having a mother and a father and two brothers. It wasn't always smooth. Both my parents drank quite a bit, and needless to say, that brought problems into the family. My parents had their fights, and as a child, the fear of them separating was there. But, thank God, there was enough love and we weathered the storms together.

I don't know why, but I can remember the first ten years of my school days as if they were a nightmare. I couldn't stand being there. It was like my mind was everywhere else but on the teacher. But my father ruled the house with a stiff arm, and somehow I needed to pass. I became very good at cheating and for ten years this is how I got the grades to get by. Some days I would really try. About that time the teacher would call on me to go to the blackboard, or read out loud, making a total fool out of me. This caused me to drift further away from trying to learn.

I can remember the first ten years of my school days as if they were a nightmare.

I always liked sports and had lots of friends. But as far as learning was concerned, I was missing the boat. At about eleven years old, I realized there

were a lot of people out there with real jobs living real lives that didn't seem to need all the stuff they were trying to teach me in school.

In my second year of high school I met the girl who made my heart pound like a drum.

Somewhere around eleven or twelve I decided there was hope for me. I became very ambitious. Anything and everything I could do to make money, I'd do it. It really made me feel good about myself—something school didn't. By 16 I owned my own cycle and car. In my second year of high school I met the girl who made my heart pound like a drum. As we started to date, I noticed I was starting to understand some of the things they were trying to teach me in school. But I didn't have the base education I needed. This girl, and my making money, did more for me. I have to say that the next two years of school weren't too bad. But when I really took a look at myself at 18, my spelling was terrible and I still hadn't read a complete book. But I knew I could work and I set out to do just that.

At 20 I had a union job and was making good money. Two years later I was building a new house and getting married to my high school sweetheart. Throughout the next ten years of my life I worked hard at my marriage and hard at my job. Everything year by year continued to improve and my family grew, now having a son and a daughter. Through all this time my boss saw qualities in me that he thought could be put to better use in the office. Every time he asked or offered I would look into my past and fear would keep me away.

Two years later I found myself in a totally different ball game. My daughter had a bad bike accident, resulting in brain damage. For over a year we fought it with the help of doctors, but no luck.

At age 32 the first book I ever read from cover to cover was the Gospel of John.

Month by month I was watching my little girl die a slow death, my marriage falling apart and my son just trying to cope with it all. After two years the doctors thought that brain surgery might help. By this time my daughter was six years old but testing out physically and mentally about two. The seizures were slowly destroying her.

I had finally come to the end of my rope. One night, not knowing which way to turn, I found myself sitting in the living room crying my eyes out. After getting my composure, my eyes caught a book my wife had put on the shelf. I sat there and just looked at it, knowing where I was at with reading. But something was pulling me. I got up, picked it off the shelf and started to read. They say that God works in strange ways, and now I agree, because that night was the first time I ever read a book that really spoke to me. Yes, it was the Bible. I have to say that at age 32 the first book I ever read from cover to cover was the Gospel of John. I'm now 36 and reading well, but seem to have my problems spelling.

I guess it's time to take the offer of the office job and start using my brain to make a living.

All my life I worked with my back, and now there's been another change. A short time ago I was injured at work. I guess it's time to take the offer of the office job and start using my brain to make a living. That's what brought me to LVA-Chippewa

Valley. I hope to get the skills I need here. I have a wife, a son and a daughter, and a boss who now has me in his office, that are all pulling for me.

I've been told by my boss that he won't hang me out on a limb dry. He has set a two-week school course for me to attend to help me learn product lines and get educated on estimating jobs. He is also thrilled that I've joined LVA-CV to fine-tune my reading and writing skills. He's been very supportive in helping me be the best I can be.

To end, I would like to publicly thank God and all the loving, caring people He has put into my life.

LVA Opened Up My World

By Daniel E. Hamilton

It all started for me one night when I was watching TV. A commercial came on about LVA and gave an 800 number. I called the number and they gave me the Eau Claire LVA number. That was the most important number I have ever called.

I started seeing a tutor. We worked for about a year on my spelling and writing. It did not work out very well because my home life was not going well. I went through a divorce and quit going to LVA tutoring sessions.

I then moved to Stanley, Wisconsin. I was watching TV again when a commercial came on

about LVA. I then went to the Eau Claire Library, where the LVA office is. I talked to the director, and she introduced me to a reading teacher who did some tests on me. We discovered that I had a reading and comprehension level of Grade 14. But I had a low writing and spelling level.

Then they elected me to go to Washington, D.C., to represent the state of Wisconsin at the Fourth Annual Adult Literacy Congress.

They went out to look for a tutor for me. After a couple of weeks they found a retired school teacher from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

We met and seemed to hit it off right away. We talked about a lot of different things, like when he was in the Army and some of the things that he did and saw. It was very interesting. He asked me about me and what I do for a living, and what I do in the National Guard, and other things. I guess this is what you should do in the first few meetings, because you can get acquainted and become friends first. Then we got down to some serious work.

We started out with my spelling, which was not too good, and my writing, which was worse. After we had worked for about a year, some LVA staff members thought I was making excellent progress and put me on the Board of Directors for the LVA-CV. That made me feel real good about myself.

In the meantime I was appointed to fill a vacancy on the City Council in Stanley. After a few months everyone thought I was doing a good job. I ran for re-election to the City Council and won.

All this time I was still working with my tutor, and we were making good progress on me. I did

not think it would take this long to learn, but it does. It is going to take a lot longer before I get done.

Then they elected me to go to Washington, D.C., to represent the state of Wisconsin at the Fourth Annual Adult Literacy Congress. I went to Washington in September of 1993. When I arrived I met three other students from Wisconsin. There were 118 people from the U.S. and Canada. Everyone stayed at the Sheraton National Hotel.

The first day was busy. We started working on national goals and action plans. We were assigned to a goal that we would like to work on. Mine was Voting Rights and Citizenship Responsibilities.* We all did some real brainstorming and came up with some good ideas.

Day two was much the same except that they were telling us how to implement our goals when we got back to our home states.

The last day was very interesting. We went to the Senate building for our town meeting and listened to some great speakers and a few students speak. Then we got to meet our senators and talk to them. I really felt proud of myself for my accomplishments. Then we went to the Congress building to meet with our congressmen to discuss what we could do for our state to help the literacy program in Wisconsin.

Then we got to meet our senators and talk to them.

And we got to see our Capitol. It was very

*See Dan Hamilton's account, "The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens," in the section of this book titled Citizenship.

interesting to stand where our forefathers have stood. What a historic place that is!

Now that I am home I'm working with my state senator and assemblymen toward implementing voting rights for everyone in Wisconsin.

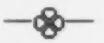
I am still working with my tutor. He has done so much for me. I hope I can do this for someone, too.

Thanks again, Howard!

A Letter of Thanks

By Jill Eagen

My name is Jill, and I wanted to write a letter of thanks to all of the people in Family Literacy. I want to thank my JOBS worker for getting me into the program. A special thanks to my teacher; although she's gone now she had a lot of faith in my ability to succeed even when I didn't. I also want to thank the staff of Family Literacy for all their help, and for making me feel welcome. Our caregiver in the Family Literacy daycare deserves thanks; she is a great teacher. My son Steven, who was scared at first, now loves coming to school. All of the people who care if we succeed are very often the ones we forget to thank.



A Family Goes to School

By Denise A. Bakeman

I, Denise Bakeman, go to the Family Literacy class at the YMCA on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. My husband, Jim Bakeman, has already gone to the Family Literacy class last year, and it helped him get ready to go to school. This year Jim is going to the Chippewa Valley School for the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Repair class. Jim and I have three children, all boys. Danial is our oldest child; he is seven years old. Danial is in first grade and goes to Robbins School all day long. Damien is our middle child, and he is four years old. Damien goes to the YMCA class in the morning and at noon gets on a bus and goes to Lowes Creek School for the afternoon Headstart class. Aaron is our baby; he is two years old. Aaron stays at the YMCA's daycare center all day long.

The Family Literacy class is helping me get ready to go on to school this fall to take the Medical Record Technician course.

The Family Literacy class is helping me get ready to go on to school this fall. I'm planning on taking the Medical Record Technician course.

I really like the big change in both of my boys who are at the YMCA. They are learning to get along with other children and how to share. This also gives me a chance to be away from them to get ready for school. I would recommend the Family Literacy class to anyone that wants to go on to school.

My Life Hits a High Note

By Vivian DeFord

My life has really hit a high note, and it has not been all that long ago. I am talking about since January 12, 1993. It was sad in some ways, but for all the right reasons it was a milestone.

I used to sit at home, clean house daily, bake up all types of fattening goodies, do laundry on a regular basis, be there when the kids came home from school, and cook up big meals.

It was at the end of December of 1992, as I sat in the JOBS office at Human Services, when an important call was made. The call was to Family Literacy. It changed my life forever. My house—well, it might get a thorough cleaning about every two weeks, the fattening goodies turned to store-boughten, the laundry goes in the washer about 7 a.m. and doesn't make it to the dryer until 4 p.m., and the big meals come only on weekends.

The call was to Family Literacy. It changed my life forever.

Would I change all of this? Not in a million years!

After that call to Family Literacy there was no turning back for me, even though I had to leave my haven and walk into a classroom after not attending school for 24 years. I had a lot of mixed feelings that day. Let me share some of those feelings with you.

I felt depressed because I was going to be with a lot of people I didn't know. Would they, could they, understand my situation?

I was in awe, because I didn't know what I was doing or going to do at the Lowes Creek school. I was scared, because I had to walk into an environment that was totally new to me. Strange, because I wondered if I would fit in. Apprehensive, because I have had a bout with spontaneous panic attacks. I thought for sure this experience would bring an attack on. And I had a sense of loss because I was going to be separated from my last-born, who was three and a half at the time. What were these people trying to do to us?

While I went upstairs to school at Lowes Creek, my little one was downstairs learning things.

The answer was soon known. It was what they were trying to do *for* us.

While I went upstairs to school at Lowes Creek, my little one was downstairs learning things. We have lunch together, and then she rides a school bus down to the YMCA for the afternoon, where she learns more things. The caretakers do such a fine job that she doesn't have time to miss Mom. She has learned to swim, too.

While she was doing her thing, I had my own to do. My teacher told me I had tests to take. How dumb, I thought at the time. I'm here to get on with my life and I have to take these silly tests.

She has learned to swim, too.

The tests were for the purpose of showing my good and weak points. The classroom is a nice setting with each person working at his or her own pace. The people affiliated with Family Literacy

truly understand the struggles we are faced with. The help is genuine, and the teachers treat us like real people, not statistics. The students make it like a real family; there is a close bond between all of us. We study hard, but we also get a break in that routine and have practice in parenting. We learn and share discipline tactics. We learn how to be better as single parents. We hear knowledgeable speakers. One thing we all get enjoyment out of is the parent packs. They are packs of things that we can do at home with our kids. For the kids they are like getting a new toy every week, but we don't have to worry about where the money is going to come from to buy them. It is good quality time to spend with our kids, and the packs are a better babysitter than television.

The students make it like a real family; there is a close bond between all of us.

I don't want all of this to sound too easy. Because even though I know exactly what I want, and how to get it, I have days when I worry that my dreams will be shattered. I am now a full-time student with 15 credits at Chippewa Valley Technical College, and I have a night class that is five hours on two nights. And I still go to Family Literacy three afternoons a week for moral support, and to study.

I am now a full-time student with 15 credits at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

One year later I sit here updating my story, and things are going better each day. I now have a fiancé whom last year at this time I hadn't met yet. This man has been very supportive in helping make this story a success. I have five of seven children left at home, and they are trying to

We learn how to be better as single parents.

understand that what I am doing is making life in the long run better for us. People are still believing in what I am doing. An example of this belief is that just recently I was nominated to the Economic Support and Employment and Training Advisory Board. My position will be as a consumer representative to provide feedback to the Eau Claire County Human Services Board on policy issues related to the JOBS Program. The term will end in 1996, the same year I am to graduate from the Technical College.

Even though I am really working hard to get and keep my life on the right track, I still have days when school work gets to be a bit much, and the kids think I should do more with them, and my social life is nil. I still need someone to tell me that I am doing okay and to hang in there.

My daughter benefited so much from the Literacy program last year that she is now in Headstart at Lowes Creek. When I see firsthand what she does, the rewards are not measured in dollars and cents, but by the gleam in her eyes, and the big smile on her face. The first words every morning are, "Do we have school today?"

Welfare will be a thing of the past for me. That in itself will be a huge accomplishment, since I have been on the system for 43 years.

It took me seven months to achieve my first goal, and that was returning to school. My next goal is that in three years I will be a graduate from CVTC. Welfare will be a thing of the past for me. That in itself will be a huge accomplishment, since I have been on the system for 43 years. Try to top that one! My long-term goal is that after I retire in

23 years, I will own a Winnebago Camper and hit the open road. I have a start on that dream also. I have $73.67 in the bank that I will build on.

To the JOBS Program, Family Literacy, and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation: I salute and thank you very much. The dreams I have had since 1969 you have helped me to fulfill. It all took one phone call, and having a dream!

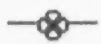
Why Not Admit You Can't Read?

By Tim Mueller

I have been an LVA student for about four years, and I have learned a lot. I graduated as a slow learner and did not know how to spell and read very well. When I graduated I had a fifth grade level. Now I have the grade level of a high school student. I am very happy about that. I got an award from the LVA three years ago.

I had three teachers. They were all good teachers. One was like a drill sergeant. She was very big on having me read books.

I had a teacher that wanted me to learn phonics. The teacher I have now is teaching me how to spell. I feel that the LVA is a good program for anyone who can't read, or spell, or do math. It taught me a lot.



My Life

By Marie Schumacher

Well, it started in 1987 after I graduated and left home. It was pretty hard but I had to do it. It was the best thing to do.

I come from a small town called Cameron. I graduated from Barron High School. I was very proud. I came to Eau Claire and got in a group home. I was very scared. Things were pretty rough but I made it anyway. I didn't know anybody or know the bus routes. Now I go everywhere.

After I left the group home I went to a foster home. That didn't work out. Then I went to another one. That seemed to be a little better, but after a while I wanted my own place. I wanted to be my own person, and now I am on my own. I love it! I made lots of friends and met a lot of people. Some day I want to have a house of my own and a family of my own. I know that day will come. Someday, if God helps me again, I'm sure I can do it all on my own.

I want to have a house of my own and a family of my own. I know that day will come.

When I came to Eau Claire I got a job at Pizza Hut West. I am a prep cook there. I have worked there for three years, but I know I have a lot going for me. I have my family and my boyfriend that I truly love. I guess I should give myself a lot of credit for all I've done. If you have a dream you have to believe in it and work hard at it. That's the story of my life in Eau Claire. I thank God everyday for helping me.

Goals for 1994

By Lori Gougé

After thinking about what I would really like to accomplish in 1994, I guess I would have to say that I would really like to have obtained some kind of degree.

Of course, after obtaining my G.E.D. or H.S.E.D. I haven't found anything, as of yet, to pique my interest. The fields I am most interested in are mass communication and some type of social work. There are no courses offered at the Technical College in these fields. I did have an interest in the Police Science program, but after a lot of thought, I felt I wouldn't be able to make it through.

I just hope that after working through the handbooks and reading them over, I come across something I would enjoy and be good at. Because I would like to be either working, or at least have a degree and be able to seek work, by the end of 1994.

My Second Chance

By Patti Ohms

Remember all the times you've heard "I should have" or "I could have"? I want to say "I made it" or "I accomplished my goals."

For me the Family Literacy Program has been the first step of many toward the day when I will be receiving my degree. I know it will be a long and hard process, but if I do not try, it will be an even longer and harder life.

My ability should enable me to endure. I feel I am quite intelligent, I have a great desire to excel, and a family that needs the income of a professional position.

Here is a special thank-you to all members employed through the Family Literacy Program. You really do make a difference! Please remember this!

And wish me much success as I continue my journey toward an education. I hope to keep in touch!

It Hurts To Be Considered Stupid

By Kim Saxton

I am writing this story about how it felt to be considered stupid as I was growing up. I want people to understand.

When I was in kindergarten I remember being confused and not understanding what was going on in class. After a month in first grade they moved me to junior first grade, where the teacher taped us to our chairs. That labeled me as stupid. I started to believe it, and that hurt a lot.

I also didn't get any support at home. My parents were very negative towards me. I felt I had to be responsible to the family all the time even as a child. I had lots of chores around the house. My mother was hard to please. It probably was too much for a child, but that was the way things were then.

Reading was hard for me. Daydreaming was my only escape.

I remember daydreaming a lot in school. I think I daydreamed because school was terrible for me, and home life was the same. In school I was teased a lot about my reading. Reading was hard for me. Daydreaming was my only escape. I was in a special reading class in grade school for three years. The class didn't seem to help me much. Math seemed to be the only thing I was good at. Sometimes I had a hard time with math reading problems. I would ask my classmates or the teacher

for help. I was passed on from one grade to the next, not knowing how to read very well.

In ninth grade math I got straight A's for the year.

When I was in junior high school I couldn't keep up with the other kids in my classes. I also couldn't get any one-on-one help with reading. I fell way behind on my school work, except for math. In ninth grade math I got straight A's for the year and I was proud of that. But I was failing all my other classes.

Family life wasn't any better by then. I had a lot of stress headaches from school and from home life.

When I started in high school I was still way behind. I was failing all classes except for math, where I received an A. I lost many credits in tenth grade. I would never be able to make them up, never be able to graduate from high school. I felt like it was a losing battle. So I dropped out of school at 16 years of age.

Then I found myself a job waitressing in a small restaurant. My waitress tickets were very hard for the cooks and customers to read. I also felt like I was working a dead-end job. I felt trapped by my lack of skills. I always felt ashamed of my reading problem. I waitressed for two years in two different restaurants. I think what hurt most of all was wanting a good education for myself, but not being able to achieve it.

My waitress tickets were very hard for the cooks and customers to read.

Then after being out of school a few months, I enrolled in a G.E.D. class at an elementary school. I stayed in the class for three months, but I still

Something inside of me kept saying that I was smart, not stupid.

lacked the reading skills I needed. So I dropped out of that, too. Dropping out of high school made me feel like a failure and so did the G.E.D. class. But something inside of me kept saying that I was smart, not stupid. I think that was what kept me going all the time. I had to keep on going for myself.

Then I enrolled at the technical college to try to get my G.E.D. I went for seven months, but I didn't read well enough to pass the test. I needed one-on-one help, so I was referred to the L.V.A. program. They gave me a tutor. We worked together at the library one or two nights a week. We worked mostly on reading.

After that I was referred to a new program at the YMCA, Family Literacy. My son Justin and I enrolled in the program. He went to preschool there.

I also had a tutor who would work with me on my reading two hours a day for three days a week. My reading level went up a lot. She worked hard with me. Justin and I were both learning and enjoying it, too. The parents in the group had to help out in the children's classroom. I enjoyed being in with the kids.

Next I took four of my G.E.D. tests and passed them. Some of them were low scores, so I will have to take those tests over again.

After that I enrolled in a program at Randall School, and my son could go to Head Start too. In the class I worked on math, writing, grammar, and

I enjoyed being around the children in my son's classroom, and he liked me being there with him, too.

spelling. Justin and I were both learning. I enjoyed being around the children in my son's classroom, and he liked me being there with him, too.

I enrolled again at the Technical College and I am working on my math and social studies. I need to take my math test to be able to take any of my other tests over again. Then I got another tutor through the LVA program. I am working currently with my tutor on grammar, writing, spelling and computing. I am learning a lot from her and enjoying it, too. She is my friend. We enjoy working together.

I am doing as much reading on my own at home as I can make time for. It is opening a whole new world for me. I enjoy reading a book and being able to finish it, and knowing what happened in it.

I feel better about myself since I went back to school. I also don't feel that I am stupid, and I never was. It's nice to feel better about myself. I am happier person for it. So don't give up! It's all worth it!

Legends and Customs from Faraway Lands

Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh

By Loan Ly

This is a story about a legend. Once upon a time in Vietnam, they had one King and his name was Hung Vuong. He had one daughter, and her name was Ny Vuong. She was beautiful and so gentle. Suddenly, two men from another island came to the King and asked to marry his daughter. The King was worried about that, and he said, "I only have one daughter. How can I give her to one of you who look so handsome?"

He tried to go home, and ten days later all of my people had to come there and have a championship contest with bows and arrows. One boy was Son Tinh, who worried about that championship. Another boy was Thuy Tinh, who didn't worry about that championship. And the day was coming.

Then all of the King's people, and the two men, came to where the King was and practiced the bow

and arrow. Afterwards, all of the King's people had lost, and only the two men practiced together.

When the sun went down, nobody had won. So the King said, "All of you must go home now, and he who brings the chicken with spurs, and the horse with feathers in different places on the neck, and one spot of gold—he who comes here first with all of these things, he will marry my daughter."

Son Tinh took his wife, and a mountain rose up.

Son Tinh was so worried that he came to the King before sunrise, so he got to marry the princess. Thuy Tinh didn't worry about it. He thought he would win, so he was sleeping when the sunrise passed his house. Then he woke up and came to the King, but everything was done.

Thuy Tinh was angry about that, so he made a flood for seven days and nights, and all the plants and animals were dead.

But Son Tinh took his wife, and a mountain rose up. All of my grandparents said, "Son Tinh always made the mountains higher than Thuy Tinh made the flood." After that, Thuy Tinh was so tired and he knew he would never win. So he quit the game. And when July and August of every year comes it floods a lot. So all of the Vietnamese people remembered this story, and they said, "This is Son Tinh* and Thuy Tinh* fighting together." **

*_Son Tinh_ means all of the mountains belong to him and he could rise up._Thuy Tinh_ means all of the water belongs to him, and he could rise up, too.

**My brother helped me write this story. He told it to me in Vietnamese; then I wrote it in English.

The Story of Gao Nao

By Ko Vue

A long time ago lived a young Hmong girl named Gao Nao. Her mother died and her father remarried. Her stepmother doesn't love her, and she has a stepsister. Her stepmother doesn't help her and give her anything, clothes or food. She gives Gao Nao all the heavy work to do.

Every year they go to the New Year party. They let her stay home and force her to pick up the mouse waste from the rice and to carry the heavy food to the animals, and she cries because she is only twelve or thirteen years old.

Gao Nao's real mother comes back to life as the cow. Gao Nao is crying and her mother hears her. The cow is crying, too.

The others come back home, and her stepmother is very sick. They go to the shaman. The shaman says they have to kill their cow, and pray, for the stepmother to get well.

Now Gao Nao's mother knows they would like to kill her. Gao Nao goes to the barn. The cow says, "Gao Nao, if they kill me they'll tell you to bring the meat to give the neighbor. You throw it in my place in the barn. I'm very scared they will kill me. You can put the knife in my door. When I come it will kill me by itself."

She goes to the New Year party, and the men all like her, she's so pretty.

And after they kill the cow they go to the New Year party. They let Gao Nao stay home and work. She works hard, doing the same things. Gao Nao is crying. She says, "Why do others have a mother and father? They have clothes to go to the New Year party. Why don't I have a mother and father? They left me the only one to stay home."

Her mother hears her say that. Her mother says, "Gao Nao, look here."

She looks. It's many clothes and shoes. She puts them on, goes to the New Year party, and the men all like her, she's so pretty.

But one man named Shee Na loves Gao Nao. And she wants to go home, but he won't let her go. She says, "I am very thirsty. Who brings water for me?"

Shee Na says, "I will bring it for you, if you wait for me." She says okay.

And he goes and she runs away. She goes back home. She does the work like they told her to do. They come home. Her stepsister says, "Today, there was one very pretty girl. My boyfriend very much loves the girl. Tomorrow I will be more beautiful than that girl."

So tomorrow Gao Nao is crying the same way, and her mother's voice calls her to wear the clothes she gave her, and Gao Nao goes to the New Year party again.

The man meets her the second time. He stays with her always. All day she wants to go back, but he goes everywhere she goes.

She says the same thing about the water, and he runs quickly to get it. He sees her run again. Her shoe comes off. She runs through her house, and the man comes through her house. He asks her, "Did you see a girl come here?" She says, "No, I didn't see any."

The man shows her the shoe he found, and she throws the shoe in the barn. It's gone. The man can't find it.

The third day she does all the same things. Her shoe gets off again. The man thinks she is the girl. He comes to her house and asks the girl. Her stepsister says it belongs to her, the stepsister. But they try the shoe. It fits Gao Nao, and he says, "Yours."

The man shows her the shoe he found, and she throws the shoe in the barn.

He says he will marry Gao Nao. But the stepmother says, "It belongs to my daughter. You can marry my daughter."

But Shee Na says, "No. It's not your daughter, it's Gao Nao I want to marry."

After that, they made a good life in Laos.*

*We were in Laos when my father told me the story. I was ten or eleven years old. When I heard the story about no mother, I was feeling sad. I thought if I didn't have a mother I would have the same problem because my father had two wives. Now I am 28 years old. I have children. I told my children the story of Gao Nao. I have a girl who loves me very much. She helps me all the time.

"Writers Live at the Library"

Dragon Story

By Pao Ge Her

A long time ago I was living in Mong Chang Village. I was seven years old. My father was 50 years old. He was a Hmong lawyer in 1965 for a year. Then he quit his job and decided to go back to the farm to be a farmer.

He told me this story about Yao and Yer. They were orphans and they lived by themselves. Yao was 18 years old. Yer was 15 years old. Their parents had died when they were small. Yao and Yer's parents left the farmland for them to grow rice and corn. The farm was near the dragon's lake.

On the first day Yao took his sister Yer with him to the farm. Then the second day he took Yer to the farm again. It was a very hot day, and she asked her brother Yao, "May I go swim?" But they never knew that the lake had a dragon in there.

And Yao said, "Yes, you may."

They never knew that the lake had a dragon in there.

Yer went swimming in the lake. Then the dragon saw her swimming, and he came and caught her for his food. After that she never returned. Yao began looking for her until dark, but he couldn't find her.

Then he came back home. He was very sad and crying, so he went to the King's house. And the King was the one who controlled all the people in his country. He was a very smart King and

powerful in his country, too. Yao asked the King to help him find Yer.

The King said, "I know about your sister already. So please, sit down. I will tell you about the problem." The King said, "Yer went to swim in the lake. But you two never knew that dragons own the lake.

The king said, "You will see the way to the dragon city under the floor of the sea."

"Then she went swimming and a dragon saw her. And the dragon came to catch her for food. Now you never can find her anywhere."

Yao asked the King again, "What can I do? Because I love my sister so much."

The King said, "If you are unhappy, can you go and destroy the dragons in the dragon city? Will you do that?"

Yao said, "Yes I will."

The King told Yao the way, and everything he needed to take with him. The King said, "You can take ten gallons of gasoline and a lighter with you. You go back to the lake and jump into the water and go very deep. So you will see the way to the dragon city under the floor of the sea. But the dragon city will look like our city, too. There will be houses, buildings, mountains, valleys, trees, and bamboo. And the dragon city will look much prettier than our city."

Yao came back home and he carried ten gallons of gasoline and a lighter. He went to the lake and jumped in the water and went very deep. Then he saw the way to go to the dragon city.

Yao took a walk to the buildings, and looked and looked for his sister. But he couldn't find her. He knew then that his sister was dead, and the dragon had eaten her already. Yao felt sad and mad.

The dragon saw him and chased him. He wanted to catch Yao for food.

But the dragon knew that Yao was coming to find his sister Yer. That dragon saw him and chased him, and he wanted to catch Yao for food, too. Then Yao tried to run as fast as he could. The dragon lost him because Yao hid himself behind the corner of the building. That's why the dragon didn't see him.

After Yao got away from the dragon, he was very angry. Then he started to destroy, and he sprayed the gasoline all over the buildings and houses.

Yao started the fire and burned down the whole city. He destroyed the whole city and all of the dragons were dead.

Yao started the fire and burned down the whole city. ... All of th dragons were dead.

After he burned everything down, Yao went to check everywhere, and he never saw any dragons still alive. Yao said to himself, "I defeated the dragons, and I feel very happy. But I feel sad that I lost my sister Yer."

Then Yao walked back the same way he came. He walked and walked until he reached under the floor of the lake. Then he jumped up out of the water. Yao went back home and stayed on the farm by himself until he could find a wife.*

*My father told me this story to remember not to go swim in some lake that had a dragon. The dragon will catch you like Yer and Yao. I remembered this story to tell my children and all of my friends.

"Writers Live at the Library"

Trap

Anonymous

A long time ago there were two friends. One name is Za. One is Tiger. They live together. One morning Za and Tiger are going to trap an animal.

The tiger said, "Za, we are trapping down on the ground."

Za said, "No! I want the trap up on the tree."

The tiger said, "Okay. You trap it up, I will trap it down."

They both went home. Then the next morning Za got up early to see if they caught any animals yet. The tiger's trap caught one, a big wild pig. But Za didn't catch any animal. Za stole the tiger's big wild pig and put it up on Za's trap.

Then Za went home and woke up Tiger. They both went back to look at the trap. Za said, "Look, I caught one. I told you to put it up, but you didn't catch one. You should carry it because I caught it and you didn't."

Za stole the tiger's big wild pig and put it up on Za's trap.

They both went home. They ate the whole pig.

The next night, Za said "Tiger, we got nothing to eat for dinner tonight. Can you get your testes for us to eat?"

Tiger said, "Oh no. It hurts."

Za said, "Get your testes tonight. Tomorrow I will cut my testes for us to eat for breakfast."

Tiger said, "Okay, I will cut one."

The next morning, Za lied to Tiger. He

pretended he cut his testes, but he used a wild pig's. He pretended to scream. "Here are my testes."

After that, Tiger came over. Tiger said to the man, "You see Za?"

Tiger was very happy. Tiger said, "Za, can you climb the tree?" Then Tiger looked and saw Za's testes, and they weren't cut. Then Tiger was mad, and said, "You lie! Your testes weren't cut." Soon Tiger chased after Za, and Za ran right away.

Tiger followed Za's footsteps. Za saw a fallen tree. Za lied: "Tiger, come help! The tree just fell on me now!"

But tiger didn't know Za was lying. Tiger said "Okay, I will help you. You wait—I will get something to hold it." Za lay still. Tiger went to cut a little tree to push under and hold it.

Za ran away. When the tiger came to hold the tree, he saw that nothing had fallen down.

Tiger didn't know where Za was hiding—up or down. Tiger was very mad at Za, but Za saw Tiger following him. Za just ran to the farm. He saw one man working on the farm. Za talked the man into changing clothes with him. Za started planting flowers and corn.

After that, Tiger came over. Tiger said to the man, "You see Za?"

The man said, "No, I have not seen him." The tiger went back into the jungle. Za said to the tiger, "Good luck finding Za."*

*My grandfather and grandmother and my father and mother all told the same story, and my son, age 11, helped me to write this story.

"Writers Live at the Library"

The Story My Grandfather Told Me

By Tou Lor

A long, long time ago, my grandfather told me one story. In the nighttime, when it was dark, my grandfather put a candle-light on the table. Then he sat down on the chair and he called me with my brothers and sisters. All came and sat around him. Then he started, saying to us:

One day a fox walked, following the river to play and look for some food to eat. But the fox did not plan anything, only looked for food. But a tiger walked, looking for animals to eat. The tiger thought to himself, if he could see some animals he would ask some wrong questions for them to answer.

So after a short time, the tiger came and met the fox. They talked for a few minutes. The tiger said, "Why did you make the water very dirty for me?"

In the nighttime, when it was dark, my grandfather put a candle-light on the table.

The fox answered, "I didn't."

"Can you see the dirt sliding in the river from where you walked?"

The fox didn't answer. Suddenly the tiger bit the fox, and the fox died.

This is a story about how the one who was bigger would bite the other. And a person can

know everything but not say it well, and it will still be bad for the person who does know.

My nephew, Koua Moua, says: "The story could be an example of the status of today's people. Some of the people are educated and rich, whereas others are uneducated and poor. Those who are educated and rich are like the tiger. They have the power to lie, insult, manipulate, and control, as well as take away the right of the uneducated and poor people (the fox)."

Peb Hmoob

By Kou Her

In the early days in China the Meo were fighting with the Chinese. There was a married couple who were Meo. The wife was pregnant. Her husband saw how her stomach was, and he was very surprised. Amazingly, three children were born at the same time. Their heads were covered by a caul, and they were joined by the same cord and the same placenta. Unfortunately, the fight was reaching the city while the three children were being born. The situation was so serious that three officials took the three children to three different places for their safety. When they were taken, the oldest brother was covered by the caul, and the younger brother was covered by the placenta. The

official cut the umbilical cord that connected to the oldest and younger brother's stomachs. The youngest brother kept the cord that connected to all of them.

No one could kill him because he had the caul as an amulet to protect him.

Later, the parents were killed. The oldest brother had been taken to the north part of the region. The official trained him to fight, to protect the city and their people. He was a very good fighter. No one could kill him because he had the caul as an amulet to protect him. He kept the caul in a little bag with a string, which he tied to his neck. Later he became an important leader in the north part of the region.

The younger brother kept the placenta in a little bag and tied it on his neck to protect him. The official noticed that he was very strong and energetic, and gave him special training. Later the younger brother became the chief of the middle east of the region.

The youngest brother kept the cord to be his amulet. He was in the south of the region. The official trained him until he became very powerful. Later he also became a leader, as his two brothers did.

The oldest brother commanded his soldiers to kill the old man.

Once, the oldest brother led his people down to attack the middle east of the region. They walked through the mountains. One day, they saw an old man who lived on the mountain which was near the city that they were going to attack. The oldest brother commanded his soldiers to kill the old man. The old man heard and he said, "Please don't kill

"Do not allow anyone to kill that old man. He looks so strange, but he never hurts anyone."

me. Please save my life." The oldest brother asked, "Why should I?" The old man said "Do you want to know your future? I can only talk when we are alone." The oldest brother said, "I will give you a chance," and he agreed to see the old man alone, when the soldiers were asleep.

Just before the morning came, the oldest brother got up and walked secretly to the old man to wake him up. The oldest brother asked, "What do you want to tell me?" The old man asked, "Do you have anything with you? You should think about the past. You should have some strange thing with you or somewhere on your body." The oldest brother thought for a while and he told the old man, "I don't have any thing that is important, but I have the caul from when I was born." The old man said, "You're right, that is just the thing. You are very lucky to see me. You need two more things to match yours." The oldest brother asked, "What do you mean, 'Two more things'? Is it two more people?" The old man answered, "Yes." After they finished talking the oldest brother came back secretly to sleep.

When there was enough daylight, a soldier came directly to the oldest brother and said, "Can we kill the old man right now?" He said, "No, do not allow anyone to kill that old man. He looks so strange, but he never hurts anyone."

Then the oldest brother told his soldiers to get ready to leave. He told the old man, "You are too old and I won't let you go with us. When I finish

my work, I will come back to see you right here." Then they left the old man.

Every time they pushed the enemies, the enemies pushed them back.

The old man stayed at that mountain, and he ate tree bark, and trapped squirrels and birds for food. Two days later, the old man didn't see anyone come back. The old man was hungry and he decided to go down to the city. At that time the oldest brother led his soldiers to fight at the city three nights and three days. Every time they pushed the enemies, the enemies pushed them back. They went back to prepare their food and their weapons. When they got back to the mountain, the old man was gone. The oldest brother told his soldiers to find the old man, but they could not find him.

During the fight the old man was caught by the younger brother because he went down to the city to find food. The younger brother thought the old man was the enemy. He wanted to kill the old man. He told his soldiers to tie the old man. The old man cried a lot. The younger brother thought in his mind, "This old man's so strange, he cries a lot; he may have some reasons." The younger brother threatened the old man, "Stop crying or you will be killed right now!" The old man thought that he would die in the next minute. The old man said, "You want to kill me, that's fine, but before you will kill me I would like to say something." The younger brother said, "Go ahead, but don't waste my time." The old man pointed to the mountain where he lived and said, "You might think that

"This old man's so strange, he cries a lot; he may have some reasons."

mountain is the highest one, but there is another higher than that one. Or, when it rains the water gets high enough so the fish can eat the ants, but when it stops raining, the water gets low enough so the ants can eat the fish too. Or, a stool can't stand without three legs."

The younger brother asked, "What do you mean?" The old man said "You have to have something. You will know later what it is."

Now the younger brother released the old man. The old man went back to the mountain where he lived. At this time the youngest brother led his soldiers from the south to attack the younger brother in the city. The youngest brother's soldiers came through the mountains, and they also met the old man. The youngest brother asked the old man, "Why do you live here?" The old man said, "Well, I spent my life at this mountain." The youngest brother continued to ask, "Do you know how to get to the city?" The old man thought, "Maybe now is the best time for me to show that they are brothers." The old man said, "Of course." The old man told the directions to the youngest brother, who led his soldiers to attack the city.

When it rains the water gets high enough so the fish can eat the ants, but when it stops raining, the water gets low enough so the ants can eat the fish too.

At this time the oldest brother also led his soldiers back to attack the city. Three units were fighting very hard. They fought three days and three nights until all the soldiers and the people who lived there were killed. Just three of them were left. They also fought each other, but they couldn't kill one another. They were so tired. The oldest

They changed their name to Peb Hmoob because they wanted to avoid the Chinese.

brother thought about what the old man had told him, and he said, "Can we stop fighting?" They stopped fighting and they all sat down. The oldest brother asked, "Do you have anything with you?" The younger brother also thought about what the old man told him and he said, "Yes." The youngest brother also said, "Yes." The oldest brother asked, "What do both of you have?" The oldest brother took off his caul, the younger brother took off his placenta, and the youngest took off his umbilical cord, and they matched each thing.

While they were matching, the old man was arriving, and the old man said, "That is what I told you. All of you are brothers. From now on, all of you will not kill each other."

They were very happy. They cried and hugged each other. They said: "How lucky we are." After that, the oldest brother said, "We are very lucky. Even though we fought so seriously, we did not die. So I think that we can name ourselves 'Peb Hmoov.'" 'Peb Hmoov' means the Lucky Three. But the Peb Hmoov people were killed a lot by the Chinese. The Peb Hmoov people lost their property and their region. They changed their name to Peb Hmoob because they wanted to avoid the Chinese. So today we still use the name of Peb Hmoob, but we still feel lucky.

In 1988 I went back to Laos. One day my older brother, friend, my father and I went to the Tsev kheej (Round House), located on the mountain.

They changed their name to Peb Hmoob because they wanted to avoid the Chinese.

There were twelve doors in the Round House for the twelve original last names of Hmong people. For example, there were doors for Her, Moua, Vang, Yang, Xiong, Lor, Chang, Lee, Thao, etc.... I entered the door labeled "Her," with my older brother and my father. My friend, Kou Lee, entered the door labeled "Lee."

There was a man about 35 or 40 years old whose name was Chue Yeng Yang. He told us the Peb Hmoob story. There were a lot of Hmong people who came to listen to him. When he was telling the story, he sat on the stool and we sat on the floor. Everyone listened very carefully. When he told the fighting part of the story, he used his hand to show the sword and his voice to show the sounds. I felt very interested in him and his story.

After he finished the story, he made a prayer. After that, I prayed for myself to have a better life.

Living in Laos

By Xong Vue

From the time I was about five years old, I helped my mother baby-sit and work on the farm in Laos. My father was in the army, so that's why my mother had to work so hard. She raised rice, corn, squash, sweet potatoes, and pigs, chickens, cows and horses. We did not have a dog. She also had banana trees. To make the bananas ripe, she

made a hole in the ground and put banana leaves in it. Then she put the bananas on that and covered them with banana leaves and dirt. In four or five days the bananas were ripe.

In September when the new rice was ready, we celebrated with a feast like the American Thanksgiving.

In September when the new rice was ready, we celebrated with a feast like the American Thanksgiving.

During the New Year celebration, my mother had to make her own alcohol from rice or corn. At the Hmong New Year party, everyone has to have new clothes and wear silver bracelets. She made her own clothes and those for the children. There were four children in the family. The celebration lasts about two weeks, from December 1 to 15. They play a game with a man and a woman throwing a ball back and forth. If they drop the ball, they have to sing a song. A lot of weddings happen in December during the New Year. When they have the ball games, that's when they meet each other. Some people only know each other during those two weeks and then they get married.*

*By Xong Vue as told to Helen Adler

Song Kron: A Thai Celebration

By Pradab Rodnite

In Thailand, we have many kinds of celebrations. My favorite is Song Kron. Song Kron is in May when it is very hot in Thailand. Song Kron lasts for two or three days and people get a holiday. Some people even get a whole week off because their houses are far away from their work.

There are many ceremonies celebrating Song Kron. For one of the ceremonies, the grandchildren, sons, and daughters pour fragrant water over their parents and grandparents, a cupful at a time, getting them all wet. This shows your respect.

During the celebration of Song Kron, people put water in buckets and then they empty the buckets onto everyone who passes by.

There is another ceremony that everyone can do but is especially popular among young single men and women. A paste is made with scented water and powder. Then the person with the paste will ask another, possibly even a stranger, if they can put the paste on that person's face—usually just their cheek but sometimes their entire face. Traditionally it is a Thai custom that men and women are not allowed to even touch one another until after they are married. This Song Kron ceremony is one acceptable way for men and women to touch.

There are also parades to celebrate Song Kron. Some of the people in the parade carry a Buddha. People line up along the side of the road to watch

Some of the people in the parade carry a Buddha.

and put water on the Buddha. They believe that it brings them good luck.

During the celebration of Song Kron, people have a lot of fun playing with water. For example, they put water in buckets and then they empty the buckets onto everyone who passes by. Some people use a garden hose to spray water onto others.

Sometimes they spray each other and then both sides get wet. Sometimes people get wet even if they are all dressed up. Then they might get mad, but mostly everyone is good-natured.

At night, we have parties with family and friends. We eat, drink and sometimes dance. Everyone has a lot of fun.

After Song Kron, everyone has good memories to take with them when they go back to work.

The Ravages of War

My Story

By Ger Xiong

When I was a young child, I lived in a village in Laos. The Vietnamese controlled my village. They would force us to give them corn and rice. They would take our pigs and chickens and buffalo. They would force the Hmong people to make roads. If a Vietnamese soldier wanted to sleep with a Hmong man's wife, he couldn't say too much. If the husband said, "No!" the soldier would shoot him.

When I was twelve my family moved to the mountains called Poobia. Many people in my village moved to the mountains to get away from the Vietnamese. The leader of our people was Yong Youa Her. The Vietnamese soldiers followed us into the mountains and fought with us. My brother was killed by the Vietnamese. We couldn't win because we had no guns or food to eat. It was too cold in the mountains to grow rice. I had no rice or corn to eat, so I had to eat plants and leaves and bark from the trees. The clouds in the mountains covered the sun and the moon every day and every night.

We couldn't win because we had no guns or food to eat.

After one year we escaped from the Vietnamese soldiers during the night. My family went to live in the lowlands, so we could grow rice again. We

"surrendered" to the Vietnamese so they wouldn't kill us. In our minds we didn't like the Vietnamese, but we said that we agreed with them so we could stay alive.

The Vietnamese knew my father was a captain in the American army, so he had to hide in the jungle. I told the Vietnamese soldiers my father was dead, but I would hide food under my clothing and bring it to my father. The Vietnamese soldiers caught my father and took him to another village. He was very sick. They gave him something to make him sleep, and he had Vietnamese soldiers guarding him.

I told the Vietnamese soldiers my father was dead, but I would hide food under my clothing and bring it to my father.

Early one morning when the rooster crowed, he woke up and the guards were all sleeping. So he escaped back to the jungle. He came to my village, so I knew he had escaped. But the Vietnamese soldiers told me he was dead, even though they knew he was alive. They would hide in the trees or by my house at night to watch for him.

When I was about 14 my family moved to the jungle to escape the Vietnamese.

When I was 15 I became a soldier in the Hmong army. I fought the Vietnamese in the villages and mountains and jungles for about two years. My father was a leader in the Hmong army and also helped the American soldiers. He told me to move to Thailand where I would be safe. My mother and the rest of my family stayed in the village. My father and I walked for ten days to get to the Mekong River. The river was very wide and very

I had to prove that I had been a soldier, so I showed them a picture of myself and my father in our uniforms.

fast and I had no boat to cross it. I took stalks from bamboo and put them under my arms, so I wouldn't sink. I was very scared because it was dark and I couldn't see. I was afraid a crocodile might eat me. After I crossed the Mekong River I had to always walk at night. My father walked with me. I ate the food I brought with me and twigs from the butternut tree.

I went to the refugee camp in Thailand and lived there for about two years. While I lived in the camp, I worked mixing cement on a road crew in Thailand. At the camp I met Che Vang, and she and I were married. I had to decide if I would go back to Laos or go to America. There was little food and water in the camp. I was very sad to leave my family and the other people in the camp, but I decided to go to America. My father didn't want to go to America. He wanted to stay in the camp and go back to Laos. My life was in danger because I had been a soldier in Laos, and my father was still in the army, so I was allowed to go to America.

I had to prove that I had been a soldier, so I showed them a picture of myself and my father in our uniforms. If my father and I had not been soldiers I wouldn't have been able to go to America. I had to interview with the American officials, and they would decide if I was qualified to go.

Then I took a bus to another camp, where I studied English for six months. I had to be interviewed again, and it was decided that I could go to America.

Che Vang and my daughter Shoua and my son Koua and I took a bus to Bangkok and then a plane to California. We changed planes there and flew to Missoula, Montana, where my wife's brother lives. They showed me lots of strange food like hot dogs and hamburgers and sandwiches. I didn't think I could eat this food and maybe I would starve. I lived in Montana for about six months.

My sister and brother-in-law lived in Eau Claire, and they came to Montana and drove us here.

My Family Makes a New Life in a New Country

By Zong Chang

I was born in Laos on June 2, 1961. My family were farmers. My father was also a soldier. When I was young I helped my mom and dad feed chickens, pigs, buffaloes and horses. I helped my parents take care of my younger brothers and sisters. I am one of six brothers and six sisters. Two sisters and four brothers are still living.

After 1975, my leader, General Vang Pao Vang, lost the war with North Vietnam, and he moved to the United States. We didn't like the North Vietnam government. We took the guns and we went to the jungle to fight with North Vietnam.

After that we climbed to the mountains. We didn't have any food or rice to eat. My family and I went to the jungle to gather something to eat like bamboo, plants, bananas or many things we could find to keep alive.

We chopped our way for twelve days through the jungle to the Mekong River.

My father died in 1979 of a disease. In 1980 my wife and I, my mom and three brothers decided to move to Thailand. We didn't want the Vietnamese to see us, so we decided to hide in the daytime and walk at night. Our group was 100 people and we chopped our way for twelve days through the jungle to the Mekong River. One night my wife, my mom and two brothers got separated from me because the North Vietnam Navy shot at us. One brother and I got across the river and to the U.N. camp. We found my wife who got there ahead of us. She told me that my mom and two brothers didn't get across and were still in Laos. I worried about them.

My wife, my brother and I went to Banvinia camp for about three years. During that time, I hired a man to get my mom and two brothers from Laos. After they arrived, we all decided to move from Thailand to the U.S. We went to register at the J.V.A. Office. After that, we went to Panatnikhom Camp to study English for six months. We arrived in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. on September 24, 1987. My sister and brother-in-law met us at the airport. We were very, very happy.

We went to Panatnikhom Camp to study English for six months.

Then my cousin took me to register at the Chippewa Valley Technical College in October. My

teacher tested me by asking many questions. I couldn't answer the questions because I couldn't speak very much English. Now I have improved a lot.

"Writers Live at the Library"

Hmong Pilot Story

By Pao Ge Her

This story tells about a Hmong pilot. Twenty years ago I was living in Padome City. I was twelve years old; my brother was 26 years old. He was one of the Hmong soldiers. In 1970 he told me about one of the Hmong pilots, a very intelligent man. His name was Mr. Lee Lue; he was 26 years old.

He was a tall and handsome-looking man. In 1968 he started to learn how to fly in the Air Force. The plane was called a T28 and was made by Japan. In Laos, 1969, he became the number one pilot. And he was the best fighting man of his group. He shot down many enemy planes and targets. A lot of enemy soldiers were killed by his machine gun. He was fighting very hard in 1969 to 1971, and he became the leader of his pilot group. In 1971, Mr. Lee Lue taught his group of pilots how to fight.

He became the number one pilot. And he was the best fighting man of his group.

In 1972, Mr. Lee Lue was retired for one year, not to return to fight. But the Hmong general was not very happy, because nobody in the pilot group was as good as he was. Then in 1973 the Hmong

general was told that Mr. Lee Lue went to fight against the enemy.

He flew his plane and went back to fight. And the North Vietnamese soldiers shot his plane down. Then his plane was destroyed in 1973, and Mr. Lee Lue died in 1973.

After that, all the Hmong people who knew Mr. Lee Lue were very sad and felt bad, because he was the intelligent pilot in our country. I think Mr. Lee Lue is one of our great pilot heroes of 1969-1971, because he loved all Hmong people and my country. And my brother wanted me to know this story of Mr. Lee Lue. I had to remember this story to tell my children and friends about Mr. Lee Lue.

River Crossing

By Howard L. Hayden

We got called out to pull security for a company that needed to cross a river. They brought along a ferry for the operation, hauled in by a big crane helicopter.

Well, we worked at it all day but couldn't get the company across before nightfall, so we pulled back and set up a perimeter. In Vietnam, the security perimeter was set up in a circle, like the old wagon trains, for there was no such thing as a front line over there.

They were marking the men down as Missing In Action. That didn't seem right to me. The men were not "missing." They were dead.

The next morning we headed back to the same spot on the river. The ferry was there. A tank was ready to cross. One man rode on the back of the tank while another was walking toward it, taking pictures.

Then the man on the tank jumped off and triggered a booby-trap, a 500-pound bomb. The explosion blew the tank into the water, along with all the men on the ferry.

Shrapnel hit a track pulling security a thousand meters away. One man was killed. I was pulling security 3,000 meters away, and we even got hit by the shrapnel.

We went back to the river and found a hole in the ground, thirty feet wide and thirty feet deep. The men thrown from the ferry got out all right, and the men in the tank were okay, too, but the man who had jumped off the tank, triggering the booby-trap, and the man walking toward the tank, taking pictures, were both gone.

Well, we looked for the pieces of the men but found only enough to put together half a man. The next day we were told that they were marking the men down as Missing In Action. That didn't seem right to me. The men were not "missing." They were dead. We just couldn't find all the pieces.

One of the things I learned in Vietnam is that you make one trail when you go out into the woods, and you make a new trail when you come back, even if it's only an hour later. If you don't,

the chances are good you'll hit a mine, for the enemy will booby-trap it that fast.

The mistake this day was to use the same trail twice. We should not have tried to cross the river the second day at the same spot. However, we were not in charge of the operation.

Short Time

By Howard L. Hayden

My time in Vietnam was just about up, so I started looking for my Port Call. In the Army, we were in the country for thirteen months but got our 30-day drop notice after twelve months. My twelve months would be up in two weeks. It was July, 1968.

By now, everyone I knew had his Port Call. Everyone but me. Another week went by. Then three weeks and still no Port Call. The shorter the time left, the more scared I got. With only weeks to go, I was making plans to see my wife and family and the daughter I'd never seen.

The VC mortared our base camp every night.

The VC mortared our base camp every night. Finally it got so bad I couldn't even sleep in the hootch anymore. Every night I slept in an underground bunker because I was afraid not to. It was the only place I felt safe.

Then there was only one week left of my thirteen months. Still no Port Call. I knew

In just two days I was due to leave the country.

something was wrong and started checking into it. Everywhere I went they sent me somewhere else. The base at Tay Ninh wasn't as big as Cu Chi, but all this running around was getting me nowhere.

Finally, with just two days to go, I found the right place to ask about my papers. Where were they? In just two days I was due to leave the country, and I hadn't been checked out by the doctor or turned in my guns and equipment.

The man looked up my Port Call and came back to tell me they were just going to pull it but that I still had over thirty days to go. I couldn't believe it. "No way," I said. "My thirteen months are up in two days." He looked at me and said, "No way. It's right here on the paper. You've got a month to go."

I was mad by that time, so I started hollering at him, "That paper's wrong! You better find the right paper that tells when I came to this damn country!" Well, he went back again to check and returned with a funny look on his face that told me something was wrong. "You're right," he said. "Someone's put the wrong date on your Port Call." After that, they worked real fast to get me out of the country. I don't know if it was true, but someone told me they'd have to pay $65 a day if they didn't get me out of Vietnam on time.

Back at base camp I turned in my equipment, then went off to see the doctor. He asked if I was

It was some helicopter. No doors. No seats.

sick, if I had anything he should know about. I answered, "No." He looked at me and said, "Okay. You can go home."

The next thing was to get me to Saigon fast. It was my last day. They also thought they had a plane in Saigon ready to fly back to the States. The trouble was there were no flights from Tay Ninh to Saigon.

Well, that problem was solved by putting me on a helicopter headed for the boneyard in Saigon. It was some helicopter. No doors. No seats. I looked at the guy. He looked at me. "That's all we've got," he said. "Take it or leave it." I took it.

It was a long ride to Saigon. I was clinging to the floor of the helicopter with my little finger stuck through a hole. I sat in the middle because I'm afraid of heights, but it didn't help much. The pilot flew from side to side, and I could see the ground through the holes where the doors should've been. It was scary. And sometimes he flew so low I was afraid we'd get shot down.

I was clinging to the floor of the helicopter with my little finger stuck through a hole.

It was a long ride, but we made it. My little finger almost didn't make it though. It was red and blue.

When I got off the helicopter, the men on board looked at me, waiting for me to say something. I was damned if I was going to say thank you or let them know how scared I was. I just got up and walked away without a word. I was in Saigon, and that was all I cared about.

Everywhere in Vietnam, the land belonged to the VC at night.

We waited a long time for the plane to come in. There was a bus standing by, but no airfield that I could see. It was getting dark and in Vietnam, everywhere in Vietnam, the land belonged to the VC at night. I had no gun. They had taken that away from me before I left Tay Ninh. I was getting scared, but it was nothing compared to how scared I was going to get.

Finally they told us to get on the bus; the plane was coming in. I looked at the M.P. and asked him where the airfield was. He said, "In the next town." That's when I really got scared. We were a busload of unarmed G.I.'s going through No Man's Land, and we only had a jeep, two M.P.'s, and a machine gun to guard us. It was three o'clock in the morning. I was so afraid we were going to be ambushed, and not be able to defend ourselves, that I wanted to cry. I needed my gun back, for that's what had kept me alive all this time.

I'm sure they wouldn't have sent us out with only a jeep escort if we were in any danger. The whole trip from Saigon to the airstrip at Bien Hoa must have been very secure but, to me, it was like No Man's Land, and I wanted my gun back.

We were a busload of unarmed G.I.'s going through No Man's Land.

We got on the plane, and I know we all wanted to take off right away, but we couldn't. We had to wait for ground security. An hour after we left Saigon, at four in the morning, we finally rolled down the runway, and everybody got very, very quiet. I think we were afraid of getting mortared before we left the strip. The plane picked up speed.

Now I was afraid of getting shot when we landed.

All at once everybody hollered at the top of their voices, "Get it up! Get it up!" And I was yelling right along with them.

When the wheels were off the runway, everybody hollered again, "Higher! Get it up higher!" I don't know what made us all yell at the same time. Maybe the only safe place for all of us was high enough so the VC couldn't shoot us down. Then things got quiet again. We were in the air.

I hadn't stopped worrying, though. Now I was afraid of getting shot when we landed. It was in the news in Vietnam that a G.I. had been shot and killed as soon as he got off the plane, by a father whose son had died in Vietnam. That's all I could think of. I had made it all the way through the war, and now I might be shot when I landed.

After an eighteen-hour flight, we got to San Francisco where they issued us a whole new set clothes, and I threw away my old uniform. My Port Call was so screwed up in Vietnam that they never knew back home that I was coming. I wanted to surprise them by flying all the way into Eau Claire, but I couldn't. There was no flight from the Twin Cities to Eau Claire until noon the next day, and I couldn't stand to wait any longer. Before leaving San Francisco, I called home to have them come and get me. My wife, my ma, and my dad drove to the Cities at midnight to meet the plane.

Finding a New Homeland

A Getaway from Laos

By Chia Xiong

Leaving my parents behind in Laos was the hardest thing I had to cope with. My brothers and I walked through the jungle with my aunts, uncles, grandma and about 200 people escaping from Laos.

One day my parents were arguing about escaping to Thailand. My mother wanted to leave Laos, but my father disagreed. He said, "We have many children to carry, and also escaping from Laos is a very dangerous thing to do right now."

A couple of days later I had an uncle who had escaped out of jail. Before all the commotion of North Vietnam taking over Laos, my uncle was put in jail because the Communists from the war had caught him and put him in jail in North Vietnam. When he escaped, he met with my parents and asked them if they knew any rescuers from Thailand. He wanted to leave Laos as soon as possible before the Communists caught him and put him back in jail. Then a few days passed, and the rescuers came to our house at night and talked about leaving Laos. My father wanted a family

The rescuers came to our house at night and talked about leaving Laos.

I wanted to leave because the North Vietnamese would put me into a military school if I stayed.

meeting with my three other uncles to discuss if we would go to Thailand or not. They all agreed to leave. Then we got ready for our big getaway! I was very excited because I really wanted to leave Laos so bad. I wanted to leave because the North Vietnamese would put me into a military school if I stayed.

As soon as the sun set, we entered the jungle to meet the waiting rescuers. We walked for a whole night and a half day. My mom could not keep on walking any more because she was nine months pregnant. So she thought that going to Thailand was a wrong idea since she was expecting another child.

My parents decided to go back home, but I wanted to go with my aunts, uncles and grandma to Thailand. So I asked if I could go with them. First, my parents said "No"; but later on they said "Yes, you can go and take your two brothers along with you." They said, "Soon after the baby is born we will come after you; you take good care of your two brothers." Then my parents divided some clothes, food and money to take along with us. We said good-bye to them and to my brothers and sisters. We started moving on and left them behind. We were separated for the first time. My family and I did not see each other again until the day my father came to visit us in the United States. I still have not seen my mother, my sisters and my brothers who were left behind at that time.

My Name Is Kou Vang

By Kou Vang

Our family was one of the earliest to come to Nong Khai Camp.

My mother's name is Wang Xiong. She was born in Laos and she was married in Laos to Yeng Vang. My father used a sewing machine to make clothes in a factory to sell to stores. My mother had two children in Laos. Then we had to leave Laos to go to a refugee camp in Thailand in 1975. We crossed the Mekong River in a boat to go to Nong Khai. Our family was one of the earliest to come to Nong Khai Camp. We were there for two or three years; then we had to leave and we had to take a bus to another camp, Binvanai Camp. I met my husband, Vang Neng Xiong, there and we were married in 1986.

We flew on a plane from Thailand to the United States on April 28, 1992. We flew to Los Angeles and then to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. We had our three children, Mai Bao, Tria, and Lue with us.

Lue was just one year old. My mother-in-law, stepfather-in-law, and brother-in-law were with us, too. The trip was very long, and I did not know what to think when I saw Eau Claire! We stayed with our cousins until we got our own home. After we moved into our house, we had another daughter, Xao, in January of 1993.

I want to learn English as soon as I can so that I can go to the technical college someday. I would like to go to visit my mother and father and sisters and brothers in California, too.

Coming to Eau Claire

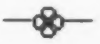
By Se Thor

I was married in Thailand in the camp. Kou came here first.

I rode on an airplane. It was a long trip. It was two days and two nights. I felt very tired. I could sleep, but I was very tired. I never rode an airplane before. I looked at pictures in magazines. I could not read them. I can read Hmong, but the magazines were in English.

I was by myself. There were Hmong people on the airplane, but they were not my friends or my family. I did not know them. My mother did not come with me.

I flew to St. Paul, Minnesota. I was very afraid, but what could I do? I saw my sister and brother-in law. My sister picked me out. She is older than I am. I lived with my sister for two weeks; then Kou came and took me to Eau Claire.



A New Life in a New Country

By Chia Xiong

Let us imagine a moment what life would be like to leave your country and bring only half of your family. Do you think it would be easy to start a new life in a new country and learn a different language?

Ten years ago, when I escaped from Laos, it meant risking my life; but I had to take that risk to start a new life in the United States. I thought it would be different from Laos thinking to myself foolishly that in the new country it would be more carefree and more safe than in Laos. But I was wrong. It was still as difficult as during the year of wartime in Laos because I could not speak, read or write in English and I could not drive. I found adapting to the American society confusingly difficult.

It was still as difficult as during the year of wartime in Laos because I could not speak, read or write in English and I could not drive.

Coming to America was like a baby's taking its first steps. You are not sure what you are doing and you are afraid to fall. When you fall, you just pick yourself up and start all over again.

I have worked very hard throughout my high school years. When I first started in high school, it was like being born again and learning to talk, to walk, to eat, and to drink. I was just like a small child growing up day by day, because I could not speak, read or write in English. I spent three years

in high school and two years in technical college. I went through so many painful and difficult times in the past; now it was time to look ahead to the future, to make decisions, and to choose the new road to go.

Now, I have two children who were born in the United States, I own a house, I have a job.

I had to find a job so I could get a better life; but I still had trouble speaking, reading and writing in English. When I did get a job, I thought to myself I had to look for a special English class to learn more English, to help me understand my job better.

Then I joined the LVA class. LVA has helped me a lot to improve my English, reading and writing, pronunciation, and to understand more about my job, to be able to cope with the customers at work, and to be able to help my family get a better life. Also, I have learned my citizenship through LVA and to understand the law.

Ten years ago I never paid any attention to what was going on around the world. I thought becoming a citizen was not important. Why should I bother? Now, I have two children who were born in the United States, I own a house, I have a job, and no way do I want to go back to Laos to live. This country is my country, too. I have to be able to vote, to have a voice to participate in the community, and to serve the community.

I wanted to be able to vote, which I was never able to do until now; I cannot wait until I get to vote in the future; and now I know every single vote makes a whole lot of difference.

Becoming a citizen means the world to me. It means to look for peace, freedom, opportunity, justice, and the "pursuit of happiness."

I Don't Speak English

By Kevin Chen

In the morning I go to work. My co-worker stands outside the door. He says "Good morning." I say "Good morning." Then we do not speak. My co-workers take pen and paper and write words and ideas for me. Then I take out my speech dictionary. I spell the word and know what this word means. It's very difficult and it takes a long time. It's no fun.

My supervisor says Kevin is wise and he can do some very good work.

My work is not difficult. It's easy for me. It's hard on my eyes because I don't wear eyeglasses.

Friends!

By Chou Her

Cindy and Chou are friends. I am Chou, the student, and Cindy is the tutor. Cindy tells me she has learned so much from me that she isn't sure she is always the tutor. We have been studying together for one year and seven months.

Cindy said her husband once remodeled the kitchen and she had to wash dishes in the bathtub for a week.

I was born in Laos and fled through the jungle with my husband Waneng and my three children to escape the Vietcong. We came to America through Thailand. We lived in Rice Lake for six months; then we settled in Eau Claire in 1985.

I went to technical college to learn to read and write English. It has really helped me, but I still like to study with Cindy. She is my Literacy Volunteer from the Public Library.

I now have eight children, and my husband and I have just bought a house. We are very busy trying to fix up the house, but it is hard because we both work. Cindy and I have laughed as we shared the story of my husband trying to put in a new bathtub. He worked very hard starting Saturday morning, but by Monday we had to call the plumber to come and fix the leak. Cindy said her husband once remodeled the kitchen and she had to wash dishes in the bathtub for a week.

Friends can share these stories and enjoy them. It is good to have friends.

My Family

By Mai Vang Vue

A long time ago I didn't get to go to school and I don't know English. Now I get to go to school for one hour. I can only speak English a little. When I think about speaking to other people I can't,

because I'm still learning. Just because my children are too small, that's why I can't go to school.

My husband keeps going to school every day, and my three oldest children go to school too. My oldest son is thirteen years old and is in fifth grade. My oldest daughter is in first grade and she is seven years old. My second oldest daughter does not go to school, because she is only four years old. My third oldest daughter does not go to school either, because she is only two years old. My fourth youngest daughter is only five months old. She does not go to school either.

Memories: A Visit to Relatives

By Shoua S. Xiong

In 1989 I went to Thailand on a vacation with my husband. Before we were able to go to Thailand we had to fill out a lot of papers. We are American citizens and we need a passport to travel. We had to have our pictures taken for the passport. We had to fill out a legal document and send our pictures with it. We also had to send a check. It took about three weeks for them to process our passports. After we got our passports, we had to apply for a visa for the immigration service to approve our visit to Thailand. We had to have a police check to be sure that we were not criminals. We had to prove that we have a savings account, and to tell how much money we have in it. We did not want them

We are American citizens and we need a passport to travel.

to have our account number, so I cut off the number.

We received the passports, visas, and our tickets one day before we left for Thailand.

We had to send our plane tickets and passports also. We didn't have our tickets yet, so we called the travel agency to FAX our tickets to us. When we sent the FAX tickets in, Immigration sent them back. They said we had to have the real tickets to prove that we really were going to go. So we had to call the travel agency in California to send the real ones to us. They said we had to pay them before they would mail the tickets to us. My husband had to charge the tickets on his Mastercard. The travel agency sent the tickets directly to Immigration.

We received the passports, visas, and our tickets one day before we left for Thailand. We took the passenger service van to the airport in Minneapolis, and flew from Minneapolis to Tokyo. I got sick on the plane. It was motion sickness. I was constantly taking pills, and I also took antibiotics and Tylenol.

We had to change planes at Tokyo. We were there for about two hours. We saw some Hmong people. We said "Hi" to them and asked them if they were going to Thailand too. They acted so important and didn't say much to us. We got on our plane.

We got to Thailand at midnight. A friend of a friend came to the airport to wait for us. We had never met him before. He had a sign with his name on it. We couldn't find him, so we asked some of

the people there if they knew him. One of the guys said to us, "Oh, he said to tell you to stay where you are, that he will be back to get you. He had some errand to run." Soon he came back. He found us and got us a taxi. He went with us to the hotel and helped us get registered for a room. He took us to our room and said he would be back in the morning to take us shopping.

In Thailand people sell fresh-cooked food on both sides of the street. We ate fresh shrimp, vegetables, and rice.

In the morning the man came and took us shopping and to look around. We went shopping for the whole day until we got hungry. Then we went to eat.

In Thailand people sell food on both sides of the street. It is fresh-cooked food that you can just order. We ate fresh shrimp, vegetables, and rice. When we were done eating we went shopping again. I had seen many things that I had never seen before, such as silks and clothing. We went shopping at the big mall. They had McDonalds and Burger King just like we have over here, but they had Thai writing on everything. We did not order anything. We don't eat much fast food even when we are in the United States.

We saw hungry people. We saw people with handicaps. They had no legs, no arms, or were even blind.

We did not buy anything that day. We looked around. We saw hungry people. We saw people with handicaps. They had no legs, no arms, or were even blind. They were sitting by the street everywhere. Each had a can in their hands, begging for money. I felt very sorry for them. I wished I was very rich so I could give these people a home and money to support them so they wouldn't have

to go out begging from other people. Someday if I become rich the first thing I will do with my money will be to give it to the poor, no matter who they are—black, white, Hmong, Thai, Laotian or anybody that needs love and help.

The second day we went back to shop and cash more traveler's checks. The third day we were on our way to Banvinai Camp. The man who took care of us took us to the bus station to buy tickets for us to go to the camp. We missed the morning bus. We were there for two hours waiting for the next bus.

A mother with a very hungry baby came and knelt down in front of me.

While we were there my husband went to buy us some food and some pop. He came back with the drinks and went to get out food. I was sitting there with our drinks and our suitcases. Then I saw a mother with a very hungry baby, maybe about a year old. She came and knelt down in front of me. She stared straight at me for a long time. I didn't know what she wanted from me, so I looked at her and thought to myself that maybe she wanted my drink.

I looked around for my husband, but I couldn't see him. I felt nervous. I didn't know what to do, so I reached for my drink and gave it to her. She took my pop and took off. I never saw her again. When my husband returned, I told him what had happened. Shortly after the mother and child left, a young boy came begging for money. I reached in my pocket and found some change and gave it to him.

It took us about eleven hours to get to a nearby city called Pachom Loei. The roads were very rough and bumpy.

By noon the bus came and we were on our way to the camp. It took us about eleven hours to get to a nearby city called Pachom Loei. The roads were very rough and bumpy. I had fever and chills and ached all over my body. The trip wasn't very good for me.

When we got to Pachom Loei we stayed at the hotel overnight. Before we left Bangkok, the Hmong man who waited for us at the airport had called to Banvinai Camp for someone to come and pick us up. In the morning we woke up and looked outside. Everybody was preparing things for the day, such as opening their stores. We saw children playing outside. The sound of the language was different from what I used to hear. In Thailand they have a metal bar outside every window for protection from bad people.

We got everything ready for the person coming from the camp to pick us up. We went downstairs to meet him. He had to buy something to take back to the camp for the New Year.

We got to the camp on New Year's Day and stayed in camp for twelve days. Each day my husband was with the men and I was with the women. We only saw each other at night. I took the women, his relatives and my relatives, shopping. I let them choose whatever they wanted. I also met my mother's youngest sister, and she spent two days and nights with me. I was very happy, because it had been about ten years since I

had seen her. I felt very close to her. She reminded me so much of my mom.

The third day we were at the camp, we had used all of our money and we had traveler's checks that we couldn't cash at the camp. My husband had to go to the city to cash more checks. That day he went to the city at noon. He did not leave any message for me, or tell me that he had gone with his brother and friends. They spent a night there and went to the movie at the theater.

That morning he had said, "We are going to spend a night at my grandmother's house." At the end of that day I had his sister-in-law help me take our stuff to his grandmother's house, and he wasn't there. I asked his grandmother where he was. She said, "He went to the city to cash more money." I asked, "Did he say when he will be back?" She said to me, "He is not coming tonight. They are going to spend a night there." I asked, "Did he say where I should stay tonight?" "No," she said, "he did not say anything." I said to his sister-in-law that if she would help me carry my things back, I would spend a night at their house again.

For the whole time we were in Thailand we did not speak any English.

The next day at noon he returned from the city and brought some apples for his family to taste. We did not say a word to each other. I did not ask anything about where he had been. For the whole time we were in Thailand we did not speak any English, but on that day when he returned from the city he asked me, "What is the matter with

My aunts and uncles hardly said anything to me. I was expecting too much from them.

you?" I answered him back in English and said, "Oh, nothing's the matter with me." We never discussed this matter until we were back in Bangkok. Then I asked him, "Didn't you even worry about me when you were gone without me?" I was afraid that if for some reason the Communists did come, I would have to stay in Thailand for sure, because I didn't have my passport with me and I didn't even know where to go to find the person in charge of the camp.

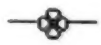
The time passed so quickly. We wanted more hours in the day to be with our relatives longer.

It was time for us to return home again. The night before we were going to return to Bangkok, my uncle asked my husband and me to stay overnight with them, but we only stayed for a couple of hours in their house because my husband's brother wanted us to sleep over at his house. It was very sad. My aunts and uncles hardly said anything to me. I was expecting too much from them. I thought that if my parents were still alive, they would pat me on my back or hug me for good luck or good-bye. They would have cried, too. None of this happened. My grandmother hardly said anything to me.

The next morning we went back to Bangkok. My husband's brother went with us to Pachom Loei and watched us get on the bus before he returned to camp. We stayed at the same hotel for three days in Bangkok.

We got back home safely. But for the whole year of 1990, in all my dreams I was still back in Thailand, and I was also afraid that I wouldn't be able to return to America.

I'm hoping to go back to Thailand someday and take my daughter with me, so she can meet our relatives.



Working and Learning and Helping Others

By Doua X. Thao

After eight years in the United States, I had many American friends. They taught me skills like how to speak English and how to drive a car. I also learned many skills at the technical school, like reading and speaking English, child care, sewing and cleaning. I wanted to find a job. I wanted to try to use the skills I learned.

An American family needed someone to care for their children. I was happy to try this job. I cared for their two children everyday. Sometimes I helped clean their house, too. The wife and mother needed my help while she worked at home to write children's books. I liked my first job, but after six months, when she finished the books, I had to leave.

My job right now I enjoy very much because I work at the Health Department with pregnant Hmong women.

My second job was at the Career Development Center. My assignment consisted of sewing a lot of umbrellas for the army to use. I also sewed a lot of other things in use by the army as well. I worked at the Career Development Center for one full year.

I got another job at the Hmong Community Service Project at First Lutheran Church as a childcare teacher. I liked this job very much because I really like children and they like me, too. I worked at this job for two years. I left this job because they did not need me anymore.

My job right now I enjoy very much because I work at the Health Department with pregnant Hmong women. This job gives me a chance to meet new people and new friends. It helps me learn and talk more English, but I can interpret the Hmong language, too.

For myself I like to be with a group of people and learn new things. I learn many new skills with American women I work with, but I also visit and help Hmong women. This is the job I like best!

"Writers Live at the Library"

A Short Story

By Akiko Soma

This is a short story.
I heard this story from my friend.

There is a man who speaks English as a second language. One day, he went to the station.

He wanted to buy a ticket to go to New York.
He said, "I want ticket to New York."
—Coming two tickets—

He knew that "to" became "two."
So, he said, "I want ticket for New York."
—Coming four tickets—

So, he said, "I don't have enough money to buy four tickets. Please give me one."

Finally he got one ticket to go to New York.

Writers and Their Tutors

ATCHISON, DONNA
Donna is the mother of a four-year-old boy. She is a student of LVA-Family Literacy and also attends CVTC night classes. She is looking forward to going to school full time.

BAKEMAN, DENISE
Denise is a student of LVA-Family Literacy. She and her husband, Jim, have three children. Denise plans to become a medical records technician.

BAUER, DONNA
Donna has attended Project Serve at CVTC. She likes to cook. She has a daughter, Ashley, 4. Donna attends LVA-Family Literacy.

BELL, JUDY
Judy's tutor is Sister Thomasine McNamara. They meet at St. Bede Priory.

BEST, TERESA
Teresa is the mother of one daughter and a student of LVA-Family Literacy.

CHANG, ZONG
Zong and his wife, Pa Thao, have six children: Pao Lee, 12; Choua, 10; Sai, 9; Chong, 7; Kue, 5; and Kou Kevin, 4.

CHEN, KEVIN

Kevin is working on conversational English with his tutor, Jocelyn Reidinger. Kevin and his wife, SuJen, are the parents of two children who are attending South Middle School.

COLON, BRENDA

Brenda is the mother of a three-year-old son whose name is Malachi Brandon. She attends LVA-Family Literacy and thinks it is great.

DAVISON, KATHY

Kathy is the single mother of three children: Chrystal, 10; Kayla, 5; and Mathew, 2 1/2. She is a student of LVA-Family Literacy at Lowes Creek. Kathy feels that Family Literacy has helped her brush up on her math, computer, and English skills. She really enjoys the program.

DAWSON, KRISTIN

Kristin and her husband, Dean, have four children: Claralyn, 8; Cory, 6; Amanda, 5; and Brittanice, 3.

DEFORD, VIVIAN

Vivian has seven children and one grandchild. Emily, the youngest child, is in Head Start and LVA-Family Literacy. Vivian is a full-time student at CVTC.

EAGEN, JILL

Jill is the mother of three boys. She has just moved to Eau Claire from Milwaukee. Jill feels the move was a good choice and she is happy to be here.

FRANK, PAMELA

Pam has one son and works in Eau Claire. Her tutor is Bev Christianson.

GARCIA, JUAN P.
Juan's tutor is Edna Parker who tutors at the Eau Claire County Jail.

GAWRYSIAK, GLENN
Glenn has a great respect for nature and spends a lot of time outdoors with his son Josh. His tutor is Jane Morgan.

GOUGÉ, LORI
Lori is in LVA-Family Literacy and is the mother of three children. She is choosing a program for further education and better employment.

HAMILTON, DANIEL
Dan is employed at Northern Center at Chippewa Falls. He also serves as a janitor in a church and is a sergeant in the National Guard. He serves on the LVA-CV Board of Directors and is an Alderman on the Stanley City Council. His tutor is Howard Elliott, a retired teacher.

HAYDEN, HOWARD
Howard served in Vietnam from 1967-1968. He was awarded the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, and four Purple Hearts. He and his wife, Lynn, have been married for 28 years. They have a daughter and a new granddaughter. Howard's tutor is Susan Leah Anderson.

HEISLER, DOROTHY
Dorothy is a wife and the mother of two boys and has been an LVA-CV student since 1991. Her current tutor is Susan Barber, a Leader-Telegram reporter.

HER, CHOU
Chou came to the United States in 1985. She lives in Eau Claire with her husband and eight children. Chou's tutor is Cindy Cartman.

HER, KOU

In "Fishing," Kou's ability with dialogue shows his concentration on the nuance of his characters, especially himself as a little boy.

HER, PAO GE

In "Hmong Pilot" it is evident that Pao Ge is not alone in his admiration for Mr. Lee Lue.

The legend narrated in the "Dragon Story" has modern elements which seem anachronistic at first but Pao Ge said he believes the dragons are in the lake, and not just the danger. So the modern touch is honestly come by.

JANZEN, WENDY

Wendy is 23 and a single parent of three children: Kyle, 5; Tyler, 3 1/2; and Dustin, 2. She lives with her fiancé, Tim, who has two children: Elijah, 8 1/2, and Andrew, 6 1/2. Wendy plans to attend CVTC in the fall of 1994. Her hobbies include spending time with her kids, bike riding, walking, bowling, and just relaxing.

JIMENEZ, MARIA

Maria is a nursing assistant at Heyde Health Systems. She hopes to get a degree in nursing. Her tutor is Anita Cartwright, a semi-retired reading and piano teacher.

KIERSTEAD, KATHY

Kathy works at the Career Development Center. Her tutor is Cindy Konsella.

KIM, WON

Won is the mother of three children. She works for Cray Research. She enjoys reading and learning English with her tutor, Tami Satre.

LEW, CONNIE

Connie enjoys going to church and being with friends. She likes to cook and knit. Her tutor is Sheri Jackson, a student at UWEC.

LOKEN, EMILY

Emily is the mother of two grown children. She is a single parent raising a daughter, 8, and a son, Ben, 4 1/2..

LOR, TOU

In "The Story My Grandfather Told," the Tiger is the trickster, and the Fox the victim. The story shows Tou's receptivity to the personalities of animals.

LY, LOAN

In "Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh" the writer narrates a legend with some surprising detail for such a quick pace.

MOTZER, CINDY

Cindy is the mother of three young children. She hopes to enroll at CVTC in the very near future. Jane Rockwell, her tutor, is a receptionist at Oakwood Hills Family Dental.

MUELLER, TIMOTHY

Tim owns and operates a bicycle repair business. His interests and hobbies include music, hunting, and bow hunting. His tutor is Howard Elliott, a teacher for 45 years who retired from Chippewa Falls High School in 1983.

OHMS, PATRICIA

Patti has two daughters aged 4 and 2. She is taking a night course while in LVA-Family Literacy and is looking forward to being a full-time student at CVTC in the fall.

PERSON, SANDRA

Sandra is a homemaker and has two children. She likes bowling, reading, writing, and cooking. Her tutor is Marlene Kerestes, a homemaker and mother of three teenage daughters.

REDCLOUD, BETH

Beth is a wife and the mother of four children. She has taken care of her children and her grandparents for years. Now that her children are in school and her grandparents are gone, Beth is taking time to improve herself. She is studying for her GED and she is determined to accomplish this goal.

RIVERS, SUSANN

Susann is working very hard on her reading and independent living skills. Her tutor, Adah Riley, is a former first-grade teacher.

ROBELIA, DAWN

Dawn is the mother of five children. She is a student in the Family Literacy program and is studying for the G.E.D. Dawn is deciding what her goals are for the future.

RODNITE, PRADAB

Pradab is from Thailand. She is currently studying English at CVTC. Her current tutor is Marilyn Torkelson.

SAXTON, KIM

Kim is a wife, mother of three children, and a new home owner. She enjoys reading in her spare time, going for walks with the dog, and going camping. Her tutor is Jan Goethel. Jan is a writer and part-time teacher.

SCHECKLMAN, ROBERT

Robert enjoys working on the computer. He also likes to listen and read along with audio tapes. His tutor, Sheri Jackson, is a student at UWEC.

SCHNEIDER, ROBERTA

Roberta is a home-care worker who would like to earn her GED. She would eventually like to work in an office as a word processor. Her tutor is Patty Johns, a wife, mother and homemaker.

SCHUMACHER, MARIE

Marie works at Pizza Hut West and would eventually like to enter the food service program at CVTC. Her tutor is Catherine Smith.

SOMA, AKIKO

Akiko is a wife, mother, homemaker and student. Akiko is Japanese and says her name means "Bright Child."

SPRINKLE, GERALD

Gerald works with his tutor, Helen Andresen, every week.

STEEN, RAEANN

Raeann is a student of LVA-Family Literacy. She is studying for her HSED. She is the mother of Zachary.

STEINMETZ, RANDY

Randy is a nursing aide at the Chippewa Manor. Randy has served on the LVA-CV Board of Directors and recently bought a home for his family. His current tutor is Dorothy Miller.

STOKES, MENDELL

Mendell was tutored by Helen Mallow who has been tutoring at the Eau Claire County Jail for four years.

SUH, HYEWON

Hyewon is a wife and mother of three little girls. She teaches piano one day a week. Her tutor, Jan Etnier, volunteers at church and the Chippewa Valley Museum.

THAO, DOUA X.

Doua is a wife and mother who currently does peer counseling for Hmong women. She is employed by the UW-Extension/WIC program. She works with new mothers in the breastfeeding project. Her tutor is Judy Kolar, a customer service representative for Ameritech.

THODE, HENRY

Henry began working as a general handyman for a nursing home in Fairchild many years ago. Through his care and understanding for patients, he eventually became the owner and administrator of that facility. He opened and operated another care facility in Altoona prior to his retirement. He is now interested in working with the hearing-impaired.

THOR, SE

Se is a mother with her first baby. She likes to read, cook, eat and sew. Her tutor is Elizabeth Snyder.

VANG, KOU

Kou is 22 years old and has four children. She wants to learn to speak, read and write English. Her tutor is Liz Rude.

VUE, KO

The story "The Story of Gao Nao." has an amazing similarity to the Cinderella tale. Ko's attachment to the story seems to come through, and even though it never lags, the story conveys a strong sentiment.

VUE, MAI YANG

Mai is married and has six children. She moved to Wisconsin in November of 1987 from Laos. Her tutor is Kathleen Winger, who typed the story exactly as Mai wrote it. Mai's son, Kao Vang, 13, helped her write the story.

VUE, XONG

Xong is a homemaker from Eau Claire. She and her husband have six children. Her tutor, Helen Adler, is a homemaker from Altoona.

WEDLUND, PATRICIA

Patricia is the single mother of one child. She wants to read books to her daughter. Her tutor is Rebecca Olien, an elementary education teacher.

WEINHARDT, CAROL

Carol is the mother of two children. She has been a student at LVA-Family Literacy for one year.

WHITESIDE, JOSEPH

Joseph is a food prep cook at Red Lobster. His tutor is Roberta Harriman, a retired teacher.

XIONG, CHIA V.

Chia works in a local bank in the customer service department. Her tutor, Jan Zimmerman, is a legal assistant.

XIONG, GER

Ger is a student at CVTC and the father of six children. His goal is to be a road construction worker like he used to be in Laos. His tutor is Janet Plourde, teacher/director of Cotty Vefald Preschool.

XIONG, SHOUA S.

Shoua hopes to have enough material for a book when she has finished her story. Her tutor is Marlaine White.

YANG, LUE

Lue is involved in some public speaking projects and "School in Laos." is a topic close to his heart. He worked on it through about two-and-a-half drafts.

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